MUSIC IN ITS ART-MYSTERIES

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MUSIC

IN ITS

ART-MYSTERIES;

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BY

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PREFACE.

In presenting to the Public the following pages, the Author deems some prefatory remarks essential, in order that the reader may understand the *limits*, rather than the scope and breadth, of the work.

The exceeding scarcity of what may be termed "Musical Literature," together with the rapidly increasing interest with which the art is growing into universal favour, necessarily creates a demand for analytical essays and critical information on the science, which it may be presumed this volume in some degree aims to meet. How far it may succeed or fail in this direction, the Author desires, with all candour, to prepare his readers to decide from his statement concerning the circumstances of its publication. The Essays which are here collected form part of a regular course delivered to the audiences who attend the Gresham College Lectures. The plan which the lecturer proposed to pursue in their delivery was

briefly explained in the opening address; but, as a strict adherence to that plan and a consecutive course of analytical addresses on so profound a subject as music became manifestly inopportune, their present character must be regarded as determined rather by the exigencies of their delivery, than as a transcript of the Author's views of the vast resources of the art.

Essays on architecture, sculpture, and painting have always occupied the attention of the best writers, and engaged the best æsthetic talent of all ages. Innumerable works have been penned, and excellent journals devoted to the exposition of "High Art" in these directions; whilst the rich treasures of classical literature and the remains of antiquity form an inexhaustible field from which the students of architecture, sculpture and painting may draw authoritative rules for theoretical guidance, or study noble models for practical imitation. But these advantages apply only in a very limited sense to music. The compositions of the best masters are with us, it is true, but the performances of the best artists cannot be stereotyped; and hence, comprehensive rules for the guidance of executive art and the formation of musical taste are even more imperatively demanded than in the range of more permanent arts. And yet, hitherto, such rules have been left principally to the judgment and dictation

of individual teachers, while there is no abundant musical literature of which the student can avail himself, and no analytical theses from which a musical public can learn to appreciate the almost boundless resources of this profound and noble science. If we attempt to define the nature of the so-called musical literature which we do possess, we shall find it to consist for the most part of newspaper notices, critical remarks on performers and composers, biographical sketches, and incidents in the lives of artists; the whole of which forms a mass of information which might become exceedingly useful in the compilation of a musical encyclopædia, but which utterly fails to impart any guidance to the art student in the resources of music as a science, or its intimate connection with the most sublime and abstract principles of Nature. Even the works extant on harmony and composition fail in this respect to subserve any other purpose than that of a grammar, or mere set of mathematical rules.

Of the subtle nature of genius, and the action and reaction which music and civilization exert upon each other, we may truthfully be said to have no literature whatever. Must music then be regarded as unworthy of high literary effort? Is it barren of resources for scientific investigation, or destitute of power in religious, social, or national influence? We know

that volumes could be written in affirmation of these queries, and it only remains for the pen that urges them to add, that, while a vast and untrodden field worthy of the highest æsthetic talent of the day remains to be occupied, the Author of these Essays does not presume to offer them as a supply for the demand he records. They are given to meet the requirements of the hour—not the time. Let it be remembered, then, that in putting forth this, the first volume of Essays on Music, the Author does not presume to offer them with a view to fill up the hiatus in musical literature to which he has alluded; but rather with the design of stimulating others to a work for which, in a literary point of view, they may be far better qualified than himself. It is not always the best, though it may be the boldest soldier that first enters the breach of the beleagured city wall. In such a position the Author is fain to place himself; and, provided he is permitted to strike but one chivalric blow for "high art" against the apathy and ignorance that prevail on the subject in reference to music, he trusts he may be pardoned for his intrusion into the ranks of artistic literati.

152, WESTBOURNE TERRACE.

March, 1867.

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MUSIC IN ITS ART-MYSTERIES.

CHAPTER I.

ON FORM IN MUSICAL COMPOSITION.

THE art of musical composition is to some extent necessarily an imitative one; hence "Form" is the external arrangement in which the fundamental principles of the science must appear.

Some are of opinion that the faculty of composing music is purely a gift bestowed by nature, similar to a good voice, or a correct ear; that composers owe everything to what is called genius; that, writing in moments of inspiration, they produce what is beautiful intuitively without design, except so far as the will is concerned, and without labour, except as far as is occasioned by transmitting the ideas received.

Now, I do not deny that nature endows some people with a faculty which enables them to become musical composers, and withholds that faculty altogether from others. I acknowledge that musical composers, as well as other gifted persons, do sometimes appear to be under extraordinary influence, which enables them to

produce (with apparently little trouble or mental exertion) the sublime and beautiful in a form never before presented, as if it had been revealed to them.

To deny this is to dispute the possession of genius altogether. But what I desire to show is, that conceptions of the beautiful are only of use to the patient "Art labourer;" to the imitator of the acknowledged forms of musical art; and to the genius who designs after models of known excellence, guided by a taste improved by the study of what his predecessors have done, and impelled to give expression to that craving for the new and the beautiful, which, like a spirit within him, permits no rest until it has attained its aim, or exhausted itself in the attempt.

Suppose a figure of supernatural beauty presented itself to an accomplished painter or sculptor in a dream; his perfected skill might enable him to produce an embodiment of the beautiful ideal of his imaginative conception. Of what avail would such a vision be to the comparatively unskilled artist? Would not his unpractised hand fail in power to delineate that which he had conceived, and his attempts at expression be marred by his unskilfulness? For all purposes of execution, he might as well never have beheld the vision of beauty which he had not the power to reproduce; for, without that power, he could no more fix in enduring imagery the thought of beauty of which he had dreamed, than the early philosophers without the knowledge of

the modern chemists could anticipate the discovery of photography.

Now conceptions of the beautiful in music are not restricted to great executants. Visions of the beautiful float through the imaginations of many minds that have not the scientific education necessary to reduce those imaginings to definite shapes. If the knowledge of form be wanting, and the manipulatory skill be deficient, the untrained musician's idea is lost, his most sublime conceptions of the beautiful are but aerial shapes, lacking material embodiments: and this stern demand of art upon creative genius knows no abatement, makes little or no compromise; for, even with the partially instructed musician, great originality, and even beauty in conception, cannot wholly compensate for crudity in form, and poverty of design. I could name a vast number of works of genius which are obnoxious to this charge, and point to an immense mass of musical literature where exquisite imaginings are obscured, if not wholly destroyed, by this lack of proper construction; and the skill essential to reduce the chaos and void in which ideas are born, into the graceful order and design in which Nature is compelled by creative wisdom to array herself, ere the true beauty of her proportions can be recognized.

As regards the elaboration of musical genius, it is no mystery, and its achievements are not the problems of innate talent. Music is an art, and musical form is a

comprehensible science, based on the same mathematical laws and definite proportions that underlie the natural sciences in any other direction. Of course the power of comprehending this art varies, like every other intellectual attainment, with the capacity of the student to master its complexities. Neither must the mere routine study of musical form be confounded with the possession of innate musical genius, nor even the superior capacity of one mind over another for the attainment of knowledge. Who can question the possession of genius, general, special, and peculiar? Who can define it, much less impart, or attain it, when beneficent nature has denied it as a primal endowment of the organization? All that I am now pleading for is the value of known laws reduced to scientific rules, as the form wherein the inspirations of genius should be enshrined, and the guide by which its erratic and uncurbed tendencies should be reduced to law and order.

I have admitted that in some respects the art of music is imitative; but the imitation which is admissible in music is unlike that of other arts—such, for instance, as painting and sculpture. In sculpture, the artist may select forms from many originals, and mass them together in some new and fanciful combination, unlike any existing natural models, and yet representing portions of many. In painting, whilst a wide scope is afforded for the creative fancy to range through, colour, form, and something of grouping at least must find a

representation in nature; so that in both arts nature furnishes direct models for imitation, which, however diversely grouped, cannot transcend her limits entirely. Not so in music—all natural sounds *suggest* music, but do not make it. Birds do not sing, nor whispering winds discourse tunes; fountains do not splash in time, nor brooks murmur in rhythm. The eternal anthem of the sounding waves *suggests* music, and the artillery of heaven may inspire it; but none of these grand hints of nature afford the musician models for direct imitation. It is to the patient theorist who analyses sound, and practises for years with the arbitrary nature and laws of tonality, that joy and grief, love and hate, triumph and lamentation, are indebted for the exquisite delights that the science of music affords to their varied expression.

To show how difficult, nay, almost impossible, it is to *imitate* nature in music, it may be noticed how seldom the attempt is made, save in some few exceptional cases, such as Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, where the notes of the quail, nightingale, and thrush, are introduced; but the imitation is confined to that of conventional forms of construction and design, which have grown up from very meagre outlines to their present elaborate dimensions. Unity and propriety of form are two especial attributes of the beautiful. In imitating conventional forms of construction and design, these attributes are ensured; hence the desirability of attaining excellence in the correct laws of the art.

THE "SONG FORM."

Admitting that the old monotonous chant of the ancients, destitute alike of rhythm or variety, cannot be included in the ranks of musical forms, we find that, of all forms used, the "song" is the simplest and most ancient. On examining some of the earliest specimens extant, it will be remarked that there are no more measures, or musical feet, in the song than there are syllables in the verse, and that, consequently, the "form" of the song depended on the kind of verse to which it was wedded.

As an illustration of this early "form," I would refer to an ancient song, found inserted in a poem written by one Lambert le Cors (or the short*), in the year 1140. It has been handed down to us by a beautiful illuminated transcript, made in the year 1338, now preserved in the Bodleian library. The music is noted with Gregorian symbols of the old lozenge shape upon a staff of five red lines. The melody is quaint, and a kind of melancholy sentiment pervades it: it is unaccompanied by a bass, or harmony. If, therefore, it was sung conjointly with instruments, as was usually the case with

* History does not say why this Lambert le Cors was nicknamed "the short;" but it has been suggested that probably it was in contrast to his poem, which is long, consisting of 20,000 lines.

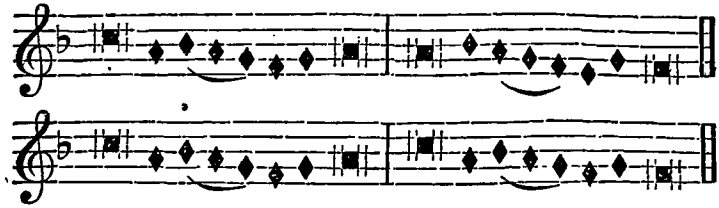
metrical romances, the instruments most probably played the same notes as indicated for the voice. The verse is the Alexandrine, or twelve-syllable verse. The following are the original words :—

"Ensi va qui amours
Demaine à son commant
A qui que soit dolours,
Ensi va qui amours
As mauvais est langours,
Nos biens mais non porquant.
Ensi va qui amours
Demaine à son commant."

A translation of the foregoing is inserted in Dr. Burney's "History of Music," made by M. Begau, keeper of the MSS. at the Royal Library, at Paris, to which is appended an English translation.

Ainsi va l'amour
Il domine à son grè
Il attriste qui que ce soit,
Ainsi va l'amour
Ah la lengueur est funeste,
Mais notre bonheur
Ne depend pas de nous.

Thus blandly he proceeds
Whom love at pleasure leads.
As all who live must bear
The ills which mortals share,
So all who love with zeal
Must pain and anguish feel,
Thus blandly he proceeds
Whom love and pleasure leads.

The following is a copy of the music:—

The origin of "song," independent of its "form" (of which I am more particularly speaking), is generally

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NOTE.—The music of the song called "Chanson de Roland" is given by Dr. Crotch as that sung by the Taillefleur, the warrior minstrel, at the battle of Hastings. There is great doubt, however, of its authenticity. Some traditional verses are said to have been collected by the Marquis de Paulmy, and form the basis of a poem of the same name, to which a modern characteristic French air has been wedded, and harmonized by the late Sir Henry Bishop. The poem commences thus:—

"Let every valiant son of Gaul
Sing Roland's deeds, his greatest glory,
Whose name will stoutest foes appal,
And feats inspire for future story.

"Roland in childhood had no fears,
Was full of tricks, nor knew a letter,
Which, though it cost his mother tears,
His father cried, 'So much the better:—

"'We'll have him for a soldier bred,
His strength and courage let us nourish;
If bold the heart, though wild the head,
In war he'll but the better flourish.'

"Roland too much adored the fair,
From whom e'en heroes are defenceless,
And by a queen of beauty rare
He all at once was rendered senseless.

"One hapless morn, she left the knight,
Who, when he missed her, grew quite frantic.
Our pattern let him be in sight,
His love was somewhat too romantic."

attributed to the practice of descanting, or singing extempore, on the *cantus firmus*, or plain chant of the Church. If this be correct, we are then endebted to the old ecclesiastics not only for our sacred music, but also for our secular airs; in fact, for our "love songs," our "merrie tunes," and "jigs." This idea has, however, been strongly combated by the author of the "Popular Music of Olden Times," and his arguments deserve consideration.*

Now, some who are only acquainted with musical ballads, old and new, may imagine that, although, for instrumental music, various new "forms" have been devised, the "form" of vocal music still depends on the verse to which it is allied, and consequently that no change has taken place in this kind of composition. It is not so, however. Musical ballads, it is true, still keep to the form of the verse to which they are wedded; but most vocal pieces are lengthened out, and are not generally confined to the sort of verse with which the music is associated. In fact, in the modern "Aria" or "Song," provided the rhythm of the music is agreeable,

* The author of "Popular Music" says, on simple grounds, or basses, tunes were formed "by making what was called divisions (*i. e.* variations) upon those basses; but I doubt very much that they were ever derived from the Church. There may be accidental resemblances between this plain song, or ground, and the plain song of the Church; but the feelings so naturally revolt against taking sacred music and applying it to secular purposes, that I have been unable to trace a single instance of a popular air derived from such a source."

and the accent of the words correct, the metre of the verse is but little considered. The character of the music is generally suggested by the poetry, and often intensifies the expression of ideas conveyed by the words; but the rhythm of the music often destroys, instead of adding distinctness to the verse. For instance, in the sacred "Aria," "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd," Handel has sought to give effect to the idea conveyed by the words, by uniting them to a kind of Pastoral movement; but he does not appear to have studied the metre of the words. Indeed, as Handel originally wrote the "Aria," the proper accent of the words is destroyed; for he has placed the accent of the music on the word "*shall*," instead of on "He;" and he has destroyed the metre of the words by devoting no less than a whole measure of six notes to the first syllable of the word "shepherd." Again: Mozart's *Arias*, and almost all good melodies, are untrammeled by the metre of the verse: "Deh vieni," "Vedrai Carino," &c. are as delightful to listen to, sung to any vocal syllable as to those to which they were composed. Such songs, indeed, require no charm of verse; they form pure abstract music, and so differ entirely from the first illustration of song to which I have alluded, which, without the verse, has but little attraction.

THE FUGUE FORM.

After the Song Form, that of Fugue is the most ancient. This style of composition originated in the desire to add additional parts to a plain song. In a canon or fugue, the song or subject commenced by the first voice is taken up by another, whilst the first voice continues to sing something which agrees with the song sung by the second; as soon as the second voice has sung its phrase, the third commences, the other two continuing to sing parts which agree in harmony with the third voice, and so on. This continuation of the voices, after they have given out their phrase or song, produces a form much more lengthened than that of a simple song. Its invention was an immense advance in the art, and the specimen I am about to speak of is a marvel for the time it was written; viz. in 1250. It is entitled "Sumer is icumen in,"* and is the earliest piece of Part-music we possess. Compared to the compositions of the Gregorian school, it is really a wonderful specimen of early art. It contains, however, some of the worst features of that mode of harmonizing a subject or theme; viz. consecutive fifths; and is very monotonous, from want of any change of key. In form, however, this old canon, "Sumer is icumen in," has been the precursor of our

* Preserved in an ancient MS. in the British Museum.

modern canon, which is a strict fugue, and, in fact, of all fugues, a style in which Handel, Mozart, and of late years Cherubini and Mendelssohn, excelled, but in which the master worker was John Sebastian Bach. Bach seems to have written rather for posterity than for the age in which he lived. The majority of his fugues are masterpieces of ingenuity, full of poetical feeling and sentiment, and, at the same time, patterns of the greatest digital difficulty. Let those who think that pianoforte fantasias of Liszt and Thalberg afford the greatest display of ability to a performer, know that the fugues of Bach are far more difficult to render perfectly, and that whilst the former are written with displays of mechanical skill and dexterity, the latter possess the form and charm of the beautiful, and, instead of palling upon the ear by repeated performance, become, as they are better known, more admired and appreciated. I do not think the uncultivated ear that listens to these fugues for the first few times can admire them in preference to the fantasias; but I feel convinced, that, when taste is cultivated and the desire for novelty of effect in modern pianoforte music is satiated, the former will be cherished as works of beauty, whilst the latter are cast aside as faded flowers.

A knowledge of "Form" in musical composition would tend very much to the appreciation of good music; it is undoubtedly one of the great secrets of the art. I would add, that musical composition in its

scientific form is not a mystery, but an imitative art, which can be taught and learnt, and, "*pari passú*," as the forms of musical art are more or less successfully employed, so will the degree of imitation appear greater or less, the mystery of production more or less wonderful, and the result more or less delightful. I would say to those who have an ear and taste for music, study the forms of composition; if you derive pleasure from hearing music without understanding it, your pleasure will be infinitely greater when the intellect is satisfied, as well as the ear delighted; and there can be no real mental satisfaction in listening to that which is not understood. But, the mind satisfied and the ear delighted, there ensues a pleasure which may well be envied by those from whom Nature has withheld one of her best gifts—a love and taste for the beautiful in art —while all the highest possibilities of music as a civilizer, no less than its charms upon the feelings of the individual listener, will be enhanced a hundredfold when the composition performed is arranged in conformity with the noblest and most perfect of all models, the laws of nature, and the mind is prepared, by musical training, to recognize and appreciate the harmony existing between the composer's mind and the great fountain of science whence all laws are derived.

CHAPTER II.

ON FORM IN MUSICAL COMPOSITION.

(*Continued.*)

BEFORE continuing my remarks on Form in Musical Composition, I will first allude to the causes which have concurred to protract the development of the now received forms which are observed in musical composition to a much later period than that wherein stereotyped rules of art were accepted by the schools in architecture, painting, and sculpture.

In these, as I have before remarked, nature herself furnishes absolute and abundant models for imitation. The character of architecture is primarily determined by the necessities of the race for whom it was designed as a shelter, and, subsequently, by the appreciation of the builder for beautiful forms, or commodious arrangements. Sculpture is valueless unless it faithfully depicts the absolute forms of natural existence; and painting represents an ever-present and ever-striking original, whose authority is as absolute as her presentations are faithful. But music, as an art, had to be derived (not only from

the impressions conveyed to the fancy and the effects of sound upon the imagination, but in its scientific method it was drawn from the deep and abstract realm of mathematics, and, like motion, light, heat and imponderable agencies in nature, is evolved from a careful and abstruse research into some of the most sublime and authoritative of her laws. Hence, the resolution of music into a science is a result of the growth and development of the human intellect in other directions; and whilst music has ever existed and ever been practised and loved as a science, it is of comparatively modern date; and hence we find that the possession of authoritative models in other branches of art deprives them of the value which we attribute to music as the growth (in a scientific point of view) of civilization; whilst the absence of those authoritative models in nature for music, gives to it, in form, the triumph of a discovery achieved by the all-conquering intellect of man. Still, music, I would repeat, is, in its methodical form, an imitative art; for the rules, once discovered, and the fundamental laws enunciated, succeeding generations can no more abandon them, than future mathematicians can eschew the problems of Euclid because they were solved by their ancestors. I have also previously asserted, that the opportunities which nature affords for imitation to the musician are very rare. The composer, therefore, can only find a field for his imitative faculties in *conventional art;* and this may account for the

very late development of music, compared with the arts of painting and sculpture, which flourished, and were excelled in, long before music was brought to any degree of perfection: *i. e.* as far as we are able to judge by the written records which we possess. "Conventional art" in music had to be organized into a system, before it could be imitated and improved upon; and our forefathers were not accomplished artists or rapid inventors; but nature being always present to their senses, it was not long before they took to imitating or representing it by painting and sculpture; so these arts flourished, and one, viz. sculpture, attained its greatest degree of perfection, whilst "form in music" was unknown; and not until long after the science of harmony was understood, was it perfected, or even invented. We have really no fine music which dates earlier than a few centuries ago. The ancient song to which I have already referred is about 700 years old. Interesting as it is from its antiquity, and not void of a certain charm, it cannot be called *fine music*, or compared with the works of our great composers, in which *beauty of form* and *unity of design* constitute their great charm. The works of the earliest of our great composers are not much more than 200 years old. What was the music of the Greeks (so lauded by their poets) we are unable for the most part to make out: that which we can master appears as barbarous as anything can possibly be. Some of their theories *we do* understand; and though adopting them in part, and even

admiring their cleverness, we feel convinced that (through mistaking the division of a monochord or single string for the clue to the science of harmony, instead of studying the ratio of the vibrations of sound) they never possessed any music worth listening to, and, consequently, had none to bequeath to us. A chant, with rhythm, constituted, I believe, their music, and was the theme of praise among their poets. Then, as regards the Hebrew music, what was it? Not a vestige of it has been transmitted to us. What kind of music was it, for instance, that acted so powerfully to allay the evil spirit in Saul, when David played upon the harp? What was the music David united to his heaven-inspired songs? Had it been written music, would it not have come down to us with as equal certainty as the words? How are we to account for the preservation of the one, and the entire loss of the other? The conclusion is, there was no written music to preserve. Tunes, like chants, there were, doubtless; but all attempts to recover them have proved futile. Tunes follow the progression of the age, and vary with the tastes and manners of succeeding times. The present Hebrew music, said to have been handed down to us by tradition, is evidently "Meyerbeerish," if I may use such a word. A century ago, most likely it partook of the character of the popular composers of the period, and through succeeding times it imitates the prevailing style of the day. There is not much doubt that the Hebrew music was like that of the Greeks,

a chant in rhythm: and that the words, more than the music, contributed to cause the emotions of the mind, and produce the effect attributed entirely to the latter.

Now to return to the imitation practised in the art of composing music at the present day. It is, as I said before, an imitation of a conventional kind of art, not known to the Hebrew and Greek musicians, but commenced in the 12th century, and slowly, very slowly improved up to the 18th. The first form I have already shown was the "song form," in use in the 12th century —a form arising from the verse to which the music was allied. The next was the short canon, or "fugue," the subject or theme being taken up by one voice after the other, and so lengthening out the form that it grew into a shape which has been adhered to, with but slight alteration and addition, up to the present time. The form which succeeded the last mentioned is that used very generally in what are called Motetts, or sacred pieces, for several voices in parts, and called the

MOTETT FORM.

One would naturally have thought that, soon after the "song form" was established, harmony would have been immediately added to the song, and what we call part-songs for three or four distinct voices have grown into use. This, however, was not the case; the "fugue form" succeeded the "song form," and then came the

"motett form." Motetts (unlike our present music in parts, or "part music," which is made to constitute chords with defined progressions) were formed by taking a subject or theme—for instance, a "chorale" or "chant," and adding to it a counterpoint or counterparts above or below; such as sounds distant a 5th or 6th above and a 3rd below, or a 3rd above and a 5th or 6th below, &c. Harmonious combinations—such as triads; chords of the 7th and 9th, with their inversions and suspensions—were unknown, although the counterparts which were added above and below often formed triads, and sometimes chords of the 7th, &c. Compositions of this kind, with modern harmonies, built upon a choral or plain chant, are occasionally to be met with of a very late date. Sebastian Bach was very fond of founding his organ preludes on these "chorales," and using the subject and counterpart as a double fugue. Mendelssohn, imitating Bach, has also left specimens of this kind of writing; and, it is said, in his Reformation Symphony a chorale is introduced and forms a very strong feature of the work. I say, this symphony of Mendelssohn is *said* to contain this kind of writing, because it has never been performed, and very few have even been permitted to see the score, the executors of the late lamented composer refusing to allow the work to be performed or printed, although the interest about it increases yearly. Another notable example of the way in which the early "motett form" has been

imitated in the present time, is to be found in Meyerbeer's opera of the *Huguenots*, in which a chorale forms the subject of the overture, and is introduced again in the opera, whilst all sorts of passages are sung above or below it. I do not mean to assert that all motetts are built upon a chorale or chant; some are made out of a "fugal subject" or "theme" allotted to one voice, and imitated more or less strictly by other voices at various intervals, and some (of later date than those first met with) are harmonized like our part songs, forming an ordinary quartett for four voices, or harmonized melody. What I mean is, that the early form of writing for several voices, when the *fugue form* was not adopted, was the *motett form*, in which harmony was produced by adding counterpoint, or counter parts, to a given subject or theme.*

It seems an anomaly that the fugue form should have been invented and adopted before what seems much more natural, "the harmonized song form." Dr. Burney says, on this subject: "It is a matter of surprise that

* For ancient rules for various kinds of motetts, *vide* "Ars Contrapuncti," MSS. by John de Muris, preserved in the Vatican Library; also Franco's tract on "Measured Music," in which he says, "In *conductis* aliter est operandum, quia qui vult facere conductum, primum cantum invenire debet pulchriorem quam potest, deinde uti debet illo, ut de tenore faciendo discantum. Et nota, quod in his omnibus idem est modus operandi, excepto in conductis, quia in omnibus aliis premio accepitur cantus aliquis prius factus, qui tenor decitur, eo quod discantum tenet, et ipso ortum habet.

so little plain counterpoint is to be found, and of this, little or none correct, previous to attempts at imitation, fugue and canon contrivances, to which there was a very early tendency, in all probability during times of extemporary discant, before there was such a thing as a written harmony." We find in the most ancient music in parts, which is handed down to us, that fugue and canon had made considerable progress previous to the use of the "harmonized song form." The canon, "Sumer is icumen in," is a very early proof of the cultivation of the fugal art; and numerous compositions for the church, that were printed and composed in the fifteenth century, are full of canons and fugues of the most artificial and complicated construction. What could have given birth, Burney further remarks, to these imitations, or mockeries, as he terms them? Padre Martini says: "This species of composition had its beginning in the following manner: — The first composers having begun to add another part to Canto Fermo, which, at the same time that it formed a different melody, was in harmony or counterpoint, which is the union of different melodies, contrived that, whatever part they superadded, the chant should resemble it as much as possible, if not throughout the movement, at least in the subject.

Some of the oldest specimens of the motett form of composition are preserved in the music school at Oxford; some are supposed to be written at the latter end of the

fifteenth century; others are of later date. One of them, composed by John Taverner,* and built upon a chorale, "Dum transisset Sabbatum Maria Magdelena et Maria," &c. forms an interesting illustration. It contains no fugal imitations, but simple counterpoint, added to the plain song or chant. It was considered that as the latter had long been used in churches by the priests and people, it would be easy for the musical members of the congregation to join the chorus in single and essential parts, whilst the choristers and choirmen performed the new and more difficult melody, or added counter parts.

I conclude my observations on the third "form" of musical composition by remarking, that the extended taste for good music has of late years called into existence several series of concerts at which music of the highest order, and consequently of the most perfect form, is made the distinguishing feature of the programmes. It used to be thought absurd to imagine that the general public (the far-famed million) would ever be attracted by a class of music requiring a knowledge which only the expensively educated amateur could at all understand or appreciate. Now, this argument has been proved fallacious. Who is the wealthy patron to whom an author now dedicates his works? Is it to an illustrious Duke, like him whom Pope "kow-tou'd" to his face and squibbed

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* The Rev. John Taverner, A.M. Rector of Stoke Newington, elected Gresham Professor of Music in 1610.

behind his back; or like him whom even Dr. Johnson thought it necessary to propitiate before he ventured to launch into the world his great lexicographical work? By no means; it is to the great Public that an author now dedicates his works, however scholastic, however abstruse, and it is from the Public he seeks a recognition of his talents and an honourable reward. So is it with a musical composer. If there existed at the present time patrons of art like the great Duke of Chandos, in whom Handel found an appreciator; if patrons were to be found more cultivated in mind and of more refined taste than can be met with in the middle classes of social life (which I deny to be the case at the present day), I question whether it would be wise for a musical composer to look to them for acknowledgment and reward, rather than to the general public, which in this country is so universally educated that there is no fear of prejudice and narrow-mindedness frustrating his attempts to strike out into original and untrodden paths. It would be well, therefore, if the public, who hold such enormous power in their hands at the present day, who are the rewarders of talent and the dispensers of fame, were able to give reasons for their approval; which proceed not from their knowledge, but from the augmentation of their natural powers of appreciation and discernment. So long as public approval is not derived from this source, so long will it be liable to be imposed on. Thus, whilst giving great encouragement

to real excellence, it often happens that equally great rewards are offered to very second-rate talent. This is particularly the case in music. Now, "beauty in form", is a demonstrable thing; it is capable of proof. If the general public would only study it, they would easily become capable of judging, and would then admire only the really beautiful, and not that which has the appearance, and is wanting in the true essence. So would the reward which it has to bestow be not only more valuable, but of greater service to art. At a time when every *useful art* is to be carried to perfection, are those which add charms to daily life only to be ignored and neglected? With regard to music, let the advance be made by a more general understanding of Form in Musical Composition; and then music will not alone pander to the emotions, delight the ear, and please the fancy; but it will elevate the mind, refine the imagination, and become, as the beneficent Author of creation obviously intended it should become, His divine voice speaking through the delicious flow of melody and the sublime harmonies of Nature.

CHAPTER III.

ON FORM IN MUSICAL COMPOSITION.

(Continued.)

My review of Form in Musical Composition has taken note of the earliest attempts which were made to write in rhythmical measure in the song form, and subsequently in harmony, by the introduction of Canons, Fugues, Motetts and Part-songs. I now proceed to notice another great advance which our musical ancestors deemed they had made, when they introduced the declamatory style of versification, set to music, which we now distinguish by the title of "Recitative." There is a statement, which I am not prepared to authenticate, but which, nevertheless, I believe is susceptible of proof, namely, that the old Greek Chorus, and much of the traditionally famous Hebrew Song Music, partook of this declamatory, or recitative form.

The so-called lyrics of the Ancients, whether Greek or Hebrew, did not admit of the possibility of setting

them to exact rhythmical measure. Harmony, as now understood by our mathematical system, was utterly unknown to the Ancients; and the character of their fine old lyrics, as poems, is far more suggestive of the bold, recitative style, than even the bardic verses of still later ages. Although we cannot authoritatively declare the middle age recitative to be a reproduction of older periods, it may fairly be deemed so; and hence we need not altogether discredit the claims of the early recitative writers, when they affirmed that they had the honour of resuscitating the old Greek Chorus in their "Stilo rappresentativo" or recitative form.

It is an interesting fact that the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries were, and are, remarkable eras in the history of musical form in composition. In the very earliest portion of the seventeenth century, the recitative or "stilo rappresentativo" became a prominent feature in musical composition. The eighteenth century may be considered as a second valuable era in our progress in this direction. Gluck was born in 1714, and, by his commanding genius and valuable contributions to operatic literature, may be considered the father of our present operatic form. I need scarcely add, that, whatever proximity to perfection musical composition is destined to attain in succeeding ages, a mere retrospective glance at the list of shining geniuses who have contributed to mould the present accepted form of the lyric drama, will suffice to show what vast

strides the present century can record in this feature of the art.

If we take Jacopo Peri as the representative of the seventeenth century, Gluck of the eighteenth, and Rossini of the nineteenth (and this without the least disparagement to the brilliant constellations of genius contemporary with each, but making the selections merely as landmarks), we shall be able to judge fairly what remarkable and valuable footprints the special department of operatic form in composition has made during these three centuries.

In order to study closely the progress of the art of composition, particularly that section of it (recitative music) of which we are now speaking, a century will be found sufficient length of time to part off, in order to scrutinize with care, the footprints of its development. Longer periods of time would comprise too much outline for accurate observation. In the investigation of detail, the narrower the sphere, the greater is the concentrated action that can be brought to bear on it. In surveying long periods of time, as in looking at large pictures, we are apt to allow our minds to be absorbed by the general outlines, and neglect observing that which is equally interesting, the "filling up," or details which occupy the space. It is not long since I heard one of our best writers on the fine arts declare that what we wanted at the present time from our painters was more "accuracy of detail." Now, just this accuracy of detail

is what we require in our map or track-picture, if we desire to trace the development of music. Its track should be distinct and unbroken; a microscope should unveil its merits, not discover its flaws. I purpose, therefore, primarily, to take the seventeenth century as the boundary of my map or track-picture, and to trace on it the progress of the recitative style—its development, the changes to which it has been subjected, and the use to which it was applied during a period of one hundred years—commencing from its invention in the year 1600.

THE RECITATIVE FORM.

Amongst the earliest operatic compositions, in which the recitative is prominently distinguished from the more measured song form, I might mention the opera of *Daphne*, composed about the year 1600, by Jacopo Peri and Caccini. In this opera the composers appear to be so enamoured of their notable discovery of what they call the Greek lyric form of music, namely, the recitative, that the composition is composed entirely in that style—indeed it was asserted that this was destined to supersede all others, as the recitative alone (it was argued) could preserve the verse, and permit the poem to be fairly declaimed in music.

A few bars of symphony in "song measure" is the only attempt at rhythmical melody in the whole

composition; it may, therefore, be regarded as an excellent type of early opera, and its invention a starting point in our investigation.

A contemporary composer, writing much after the same fashion as Peri, was one Monteverde. He composed an opera called *Orfeo*, which was produced at Mantua, in which the novelty of the recitative form in all probability ensured that success which the total lack of rhythmical interest would otherwise have denied it—in fact, both these two operas claim notice chiefly on the ground of innovation and novelty of form.

We will now pass over seven years of this century, to the year 1607; seven years after the invention of recitative, for in this year we have record of a new mode of using the recitative form. It is recorded that secular dramas were performed in Rome, during the time of the Carnival, which did not consist entirely of recitative, and differed also from the masques or dramas with music hitherto written. The "song form" was blended with the recitative; the dialogue was declaimed to recitative; and the verses set to music in a form approaching that of the song. This rendered opera and recitative music no longer synonymous terms. Recitative, in the short space of seven years after its invention, became limited in use for dramatic purposes, and thus found its proper position in opera; it became a most useful adjunct in composition, but was dethroned from the place of supremacy to which it had been elevated;

and the purpose of its invention, if not ignored, was to a certain degree, nullified, or lost sight of. How must Jacopo Peri and Caccini have wept over what they considered a desecration of the "Stilo rappresentativo!" Their idol of form for opera music, before which all others were to bend, was rudely seized by their contemporaries, and employed in a very limited way to what they intended it should be. If it were still the Alpha and Omega of opera, it was so in the most restricted sense; it was not now, as heretofore, *the opera*, but merely like the chorus in the Greek lyric drama—the framework of the prosaical part of the dialogue, which rhythmical music could not express without injury to the integrity of the drama.

After hearing illustrations of early recitative music, no one in these days can wonder at the change of use to which it was subjected, nor of its quick subsidence to its proper level. When we come to Lulli and Purcell's recitatives, admiration for that form of music is legitimate and well founded; but the early recitatives are far less interesting than the music in other forms by writers of the same period. The enthusiasm of the populace at Rome in 1607 at the representations of opera in this mixed form is said to have been very great, and is easily accounted for by the attempt to introduce something like melody into the compositions. The mode of representation was very singular; for opera, instead of being performed in an

appropriate building, was given on a moveable stage in an ambulatory cart. It enjoyed neither the advantages of scenic effects, nor appropriate *mise-en-scène* for the various characters; there were neither ballets, nor pyrotechnic displays. Della Valle, an historian of the period, says: "The number of the dramatic persons was limited by the size of the cart. It generally held five singers, and these," he says, "afforded sufficient variety; for, in addition to the dialogue of single voices, sometimes two or three, and at last all the five, sang together, which," he goes on to say, "had an admirable effect." Della Valle adds: "The music of the opera, though dramatic, was not in simple recitative, which would have been *tiresome*, but ornamented with beautiful passages and movements in *measure*, without deviating, however, from the true theatrical style; and the music being so varied, the populace were never tired of listening: they followed the cart to ten or twelve different places where it rested, and never quitted it till midnight." This narrative, says a musical historian, seems to furnish us with a curious circumstance in the history of opera, which is, that opera in Rome, like the first tragedy in ancient Greece, was exhibited in a cart. It has been imagined by the learned, that recitative in modern opera is a revival of that species of melody in which ancient dramas were sung; and here the moveable stage on which it was performed, like that used by Thespis at Athens, furnishes another semblance.

Proofs of the limited use of recitative in operatic music are very abundant when we come to the time of Cavalli, who began to write in the year 1637, and produced an opera, called *Erismena*, in 1655. There are several airs in this opera written in something like the "song form," having a second part and a return to the first phrase, implied by the words, "da capo," in order to form a coda, or ending. These arias are, for the most part, written in slow minuet time, or rather in Saraband measures of three minims in a bar. Cavalli also tried to express by musical sounds the meaning of single words and separate phrases in the Drama, instead of the general sentiment and spirit of the verse. In the first act of *Erismena* he endeavoured to convey to the hearer the effect which would be produced by the revolution of a wheel. His attempts at descriptive music were, as may be expected, very unsuccessful; but they are interesting, as revealing the fact that musical composers in his time began to put faith in higher possibilities in music than had hitherto been attempted. Another composer of this period was one Cesti, who wrote an opera, called *Orontea*, which obtained a considerable degree of success at Venice.

There is frequent mention made of recitative music by the literary writers of the early part of the seventeenth century in England; but it is difficult to find any reliable evidence of opera performances coeval with those to which I have alluded.

"Stilo rappresentativo" and opera were synonymous terms, when used by Jacopo Peri and his immediate contemporaries. I find in England that opera and a play with music were also synonymous terms, so that the words "stilo rappresentativo," by a curious confusion, used to signify a drama with music. Sir William Davenant, in 1656, gave performances called "Entertainments of Declamation," and "Music after the Manner of the Ancients." These performances commenced thus: "After a flourish of music, the curtains were drawn and the Prologue entered, who spoke in English verse, and talked of the entertainment being an opera (though not a line of the prologue was set to music, either in recitative or air). The prologue being finished, the curtains were again closed, and a concert of instrumental music was heard, intended to be descriptive of the sullen disposition of one of the characters who was about to appear; viz. Diogenes; for the curtains were suddenly opened, and in two gilded rostra appeared Diogenes, the cynic, and Aristophanes, the poet: these declaimed for and against public entertainments as moral representations. Then, in two prose orations that were spoken (not sung), public exhibitions were censured and defended in the style of the celebrated philosopher and comic writer. Operas are, indeed, frequently mentioned and described; as when Diogenes, alluding to the splendid manner in which they were then exhibited in Italy, is made to say, 'Poetry is the subtle engine by which the

wonderful body of the opera must move;' and, cynically addressing the Athenians, says, 'I wish, Athenians, you were all poets; for then, if you should meet, and with the pleasant vapours of Lesbian wine fall into profound sleep and concur in a long dream, you would every morning enamel your houses, tile them with gold, and pave them with aggots!' When the cynic had finished his declamation, a concert of music again commenced, purported to illustrate the pleasant disposition of Aristophanes, who answered Diogenes and defended operas, their poetry, music and decorations, with considerable spirit; after which, the company was entertained by vocal and instrumental music, together with a song. This being ended, a concert of instrumental music, announced as being after the French style, was commenced, succeeded by another argument conducted by a Parisian and a Londoner, arrayed in the appropriate liveries of their different countries: but, as no note of music found its way into the harangues of the rival patriots, it would be somewhat curious to know what the author's idea of an opera really was."

From the foregoing account of a performance announced in "Stilo recitativo," it may be safely inferred that the "Stilo recitativo" mentioned by English authors meant merely words borrowed from the Italians, to which, however, was attached a very dissimilar meaning. I do not mean to say that when Ben Jonson, in the year 1617, spoke of the "Stilo recitativo," he alluded to anything

else than the new form of composition which had been recently adopted in Italy; but I believe that its supposed introduction into public performances in this country at anything like so early a period is altogether a mistake, and that the so-called "Stilo recitativo" performances, to which allusion has been made, should not be regarded as Opera Performances in the "recitative style."

Pope has described certain entertainments written by Sir William Davenant as operas but; it is said that he drew his descriptions of them from Langbaine's account of the English Dramatic Poets. This writer states that Sir William Davenant's plays were acted in "Stilo recitativo."

The first reliable record we possess of an attempt to write in the Italian Opera style is the music to *Psyche*, printed in the year 1675, but produced in 1673. The drama is an imitation of Molière's play, and the music is written in various Forms. In Matthew Lock's own words, "Here is ballad to single air, counterpoint, *recitative*, fugue, canon, and chromatic music; which variety, without vanity be it said, was never in court or theatre till now presented to this nation."

In continuing our track of the Dramatic foot prints in Italy, we find, in the works of Carissimi, some advance in the right direction. Carissimi flourished about the year 1650; he was Maestro di Capella at the German College in Rome. It does not appear that he

wrote for the theatre; but in his cantatas he introduced recitative, and in this excelled his immediate contemporaries. He is said by historians "to have greatly improved recitative, to have rendered it more expressive, articulate and intelligible, by approximating it to speech and declamation." These laudations may, or may not, be the proper terms in which to speak of Carissimi; but there is no doubt he was somewhat of a giant among his fellows. Carissimi's works are preserved in the British Museum, and in Dean Aldrich's collection at Christ Church, Oxford.

Stradella's works will also show us what progress had been made in the art. Although many of his works are extant, one opera and one oratorio are the only compositions to which we can refer for examples of "recitative." Stradella is said to have exercised some influence over our countryman, Purcell; and, if for no other reason than this, we ought to trace with some interest the workings of his mind.

The influence which he exercised over the musical public of his day seems to have been extraordinary; for it is said he owed the preservation of his life to the effect which his music had over the feelings of two assassins who were hired to murder him. The story states that these assassins proceeded from Naples to Rome, where Stradella had taken refuge, and hearing that he was about to conduct an oratorio of his own composition, in the Church of St. John, Lateran, they deter-

mined to go there and attack him on his return after dark. On their arrival at the Church, the oratorio commenced; and the excellence of the music and its performance, joined to the rapture that was expressed by the whole congregation, made such an impression upon, and so softened the hearts of, these ruffians, as to incline them to relent, and finally to determine them against taking away the life of a man whose genius and abilities were the delight of all Italy. Instead of murdering Stradella, these assassins accosted him in the street, when he quitted the church, and after complimenting him upon his oratorio, confessed to him the business on which they had been hired; and then advised him to fly to some place of safety as soon as possible, saying they had determined to relinquish the reward that was promised them and to tell their employer that Stradella had quitted Rome the night before their arrival in that city. This is certainly an instance of the remarkable power of music over the mind, and some proof of the influence which Stradella's music exercised. Happy would it have been for him had his music always produced such an effect; but it is well known that he ultimately fell a victim to the assassin's dagger. There is a tradition that the song "Pieta, Signor" was written in his last moments. It is very plaintive and beautiful, and fully justifies the public admiration with which, in his day, Stradella was regarded.

I have stated that Stradella's music is said to have ex-

ercised some influence on the English composer, Purcell; but it must not be hence inferred that Purcell was a plagiarist, or even aimed at imitating any of his cotemporaries, as far at least as originality of thought in his compositions is concerned; but in mere methodical form it is believed that he adopted Stradella's mode, in selecting a ground bass, a species of Chaconne, which the Italians call "Basso costretto," and the French "Basse contreinte," upon which to construct several of his compositions.

In our present investigation, it is in vain to turn to Germany in the hope of finding there some trace of the development of the recitative style. Germany in the seventeenth century (as far as regards the operatic art) was a barren country; it contented itself, until nearly the close of the century, with adopting the operas of the Italian composers, and has not left any trace of independent thought or action. We must therefore again look to the Italians, and, amongst the writers of this period, Bontempi and Luigi Rossi should not be passed over. The former is not much known as a composer; but Luigi Rossi is renowned, and is in great esteem with concert singers, having written several excellent songs. His aria, entitled "Rendimi al cor," is very generally known and much prized by contralto singers.

We will now turn to France, which, in the seventeenth century, before the time of Lulli, shows itself as barren as Germany in material by which to investigate

the progress of the art of recitative. But France, having adopted Lulli, the Florentine, the bud thus grafted upon its own barren stem became fruitful, and left a plenteous store from which to select material for examination. Lulli was born in 1633, and in 1646 was brought to France by the Chevalier de Guise. Under the patronage of this nobleman, Lulli rose to be admitted into the King's band; and he is said to have distinguished himself so much in this position, that he was employed to compose music for the Court Ballet, in which Louis Quatorze used to dance. In 1652 he was appointed Superintendent or Master of the King's new band of violins, "which," says an historian, "if we may judge by the business assigned them afterwards by Lulli in his operas, was composed of musicians not likely by their abilities to continue the miraculous powers ascribed to Orpheus and Amphion." Lulli, after striving for twenty years to get his operas brought out, at last succeeded. An event happened which opened the gates of preferment to him, and afforded scope for his talents. The manager of the Italian Opera House, in Paris, fell into disfavour with the King, and the privileges of representation were conferred on Lulli. In 1673 he brought out his first opera, *Les Fêtes d' Amour et de Bacchus*, which was quickly succeeded by many others.

In speaking of Lulli, he is generally called "the Frenchman Lulli, the national French composer," "the

composer who has left works which depict so forcibly the idiosyncracies of the French people." Lulli's tunes are quoted as characteristic French tunes, because they are melancholy, plaintive, and for the most part written in minor keys. It does seem odd that the vivacity of the French nation should have found expression in any other tunes than merry jigs in major keys, and that grave and solemn airs in minor modes should, on the contrary, have been chosen. It is said that the attachment which one sees between persons of totally different natures is to be accounted for by the "love of contrast" that is, as it were, indigenous in the mind, or the "love of novelty," which Burke says is the first and simplest of emotions. It is possible that the French may have taken a fancy to Lulli, from this love of contrast which his style excited; and that, instead of his music depicting the national character, it in reality expresses the very reverse. Be this as it may, it must always be remembered, in reference to Lulli's works, that they are those of an Italian, and not of a Frenchman; and that any conclusion drawn from them, as to the independence of thought of French musicians in the seventeenth century, is likely to be incorrect and deceptive. Lulli was an Italian, a Frenchman only by naturalization.

Of the French music of this period, Voltaire gives us a good description. He says, "French music, at least the vocal, is not pleasing to any other nation, on account of the peculiarity of our prosody. We always lay a

stress on the last syllable, while other nations lean on the penultimate, like the Italians. Ours is the only language which has words terminated by e mute; and this e, which is not pronounced in common speech, has a note assigned it in musical declamation, and this it is that renders most of our airs and recitatives insupportable to all that are not accustomed to them. Besides this, the slowness of our melody, which is a strange contrast to our national vivacity, will always make the music of France only fit for its own inhabitants. Our instrumental music, though less offensive to strangers, is somewhat affected by the monotony and languor of the vocal; but many of our movements for instruments, especially our airs for dancing, have been much used and admired in other countries."

Quinault was the writer of the dramas which Lulli set to music. Voltaire remarks that "the poetry of Quinault animated the music, more than the music of Lulli animated the words." Another writer, speaking of the dramatic works of the period, has said, "the genius of two such men, Quinault and Lulli, and fine acting, were necessary to form such an exhibition in some parts of *Atys*, *Armide* and *Roland*, as neither the ancients nor moderns knew." The airs in these operas are in no way equal to the recitatives; they are short simple tunes, more in the style of our Noels or Christmas carols and Venetian ballads than opera songs. Lulli is accused of having pandered to the French taste

of the time in which he lived, and of having introduced dance music into his operas. There are, doubtless, several pieces with marked rhythm to be found in his works, as the French were, and are to this day, strongly addicted to marked rhythm, and their favourite tunes depend more on the accent than on the flow of melody, but it was not on these tunes that the success of his operas depended.

The influence Lulli exercised upon his art, and particularly upon recitative and opera music, cannot be over-estimated; his works are worthy the study of musicians of succeeding times. If he were not the genius of the century in which he lived, he was one of its brightest ornaments. Before, therefore, I dismiss him from the track which we are pursuing, a few remarks may not be inappropriate. Lulli's position in France was an enviable one for a composer; he was in such high favour with Louis Quartorze, that no other music but his was allowed to be performed before that monarch; and, according to Dr. Burney's account in his "History of Music," he was granted Lettres de Noblesse and made secretary to the King, and had innumerable honours and favours conferred upon his family. No composer, before or after him, has been so amply rewarded. The sale of his compositions produced a very large sum; he left a fortune, £130,000 in gold, an extraordinary sum in those days. Lulli married the daughter of Lambert, who is said to have been the most celebrated musician in France

before Lulli rose to fame.* Lulli died in 1687. His death occurred from a contusion. In conducting a "Te Deum," performed for the recovery of Louis XIV, the difficulty of keeping his band together in time caused him to strike his foot so violently on the ground, that he never recovered the effects of the bruise. Lulli, thinking his end was drawing near, sent for his "Father Confessor" to give him "absolution," according to the Romish ritual; but the priest refused, except on one condition, which was that Lulli should burn the score of the opera upon which he was engaged; viz. *Achille and Polixene.* Lulli at last consented, and the manuscript was transmitted to the flames. We have, fortunately, however, not lost this opera; it is related that one of the young princes of Vendôme went to see Lulli a few days afterwards, and on hearing he was much better, exclaimed: "Mon Dieu! Battiste, why have you been such a fool as to burn your opera to humour a gloomy priest?" "Hush, hush," replied Lulli; "I burnt what he required, but I have kept a copy!". So priestly bigotry, or what we should in these days call "Puritanism," did not succeed in destroying this last vestige of Lulli's genius.

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* Finding Lambert's name thus associated with Lulli's, I have searched in order to find out whether he exercised any influence upon the art; but do not discover that it was indebted to him in the least. I shall not, therefore, further allude to him, although he outlived Lulli many years.

I have already cited Naples, Venice, and Rome, as the cities where opera was most cultivated. I must not, however, neglect to mention Bologna; for, although it was useless to turn to historic annals, with any hope of finding a track for our investigation, earlier than the period at which we have now arrived—viz. the end of the seventeenth century—Bologna having previously only distinguished herself by producing the works of the Venetian masters, we may now turn with profit to the records of that city. It is recorded that Petronio Franceschelli produced there four operas, entitled *Caligula, Oronte di Mensi, Arsinoe, Apollo in Tessaglia;* and that there followed him a goodly array of writers, more or less known. Their works might, however, without injustice, like many we have already mentioned, be catalogued according to Thomas Carlyle's mode, as those of Messrs. Dry-as-dust. One, however, of these Venetian composers I shall mention by name; not because his works are more interesting than others in the same school, but because, in the account which we possess of his life, it is evident he was endowed with some of the attributes of genius. We are continually hearing in the present day of the extraordinary way in which the majority of our great men in the present century have risen to eminence by the unaided strength of their own powers of mind. In Smiles' book, called *Self Help,* are recorded the innumerable impediments which thwarted the dawnings of early genius, and

the way in which these impediments were overcome. The power of perseverance under difficulties may not improperly be considered as an attribute of genius. One of the composers of the Bologna School, named Pistocchi, seems to have been so endowed and to have cut out a niche for himself in the Temple of Fame, through the possession of this kind of genius. It appears that Pistocchi, being too poor to get instruction in musical composition, and obliged to work for a daily pittance, engaged himself as a "copyist," the duty of which was not such as it is at the present day, for we exact some musical knowledge from our orchestral copyists, but as a mere transcriber of what his employer wrote. In this occupation he resolved to study all the compositions upon which he was employed, and to make himself acquainted with the harmonic progressions of the chords he wrote out, and the various forms of composition in which they were written. He succeeded, by the aid of his genius, in accomplishing what appears next to impossible, considering the means at his disposal. He became a good musician, and was made Maestro di Capella at the Court of Anspach, a post in those days considered of the highest professional honor. If his works do not appear to us to possess any very striking beauties, we must recollect that it is only by comparison with his contemporary countrymen that his genius should be judged.

The number of operas on record, written near the

close of the seventeenth century, is so great, that even to enumerate them would be tedious, and a complete investigation of them is nearly impossible. So plentiful were new operas in Venice between the years 1662 and 1680, that upwards of a hundred, with the names of their respective composers, could be enumerated. It appears, however, from Dr. Burney's statements, that neither the poets nor composers of these operas had any great influence over the Venetians, for their names were not often printed with the announcement of the operas; but that a much more important personage was rarely, if ever, omitted, and that was the machinist. In fact, it was in his department that the centre of attraction was to be found; and hence lyric managers began to bestow the greatest attention on the *mise-en-scène* of operas, and cared not who wrote the libretto, or the music. This seems something like a satire on our own times; for if, in the bringing out of new operas, managers at the present day do not for the most part select for performance those works in which they can rely chiefly on their pictorial artists, machinists and costumiers, it would be difficult to find a more satisfactory reason to account for some of their selections. It appears, then, that the present is not the only period when music was considered as subservient to stage effects.

There is another Italian composer whose works cannot be passed over, in investigating the development of

the recitative style. I mean Alessandro Scarlatti. He stands at the head of the cantata composers of this period, and in his cantatas are to be found several specimens of recitative. Everything that Scarlatti wrote he stamped with his genius and individuality. The instrumentation he used was in advance of that of his contemporaries; certain passages he wrote for the violoncello were even considered too difficult for human fingers to master, so that when Franceschilli (the Piatti of his day) once played with Scarlatti in Rome one of his difficult cantatas, the audience (it is said) unanimously shouted, "It is an angel to whom we are listening; it cannot be a human performer. It is an angel who has for the time assumed the form of Franceschilli."

Were I speaking generally of the composers of the seventeenth century, and tracing the development of music in every known form, I should not omit mentioning many names familiar to English ears; such as Orlando Gibbons, Pelham Humphrey, Blow, Henry Lawes, and others, besides the Frenchman, Grabut, who resided in this country; also "Cambert, the ignominious," who came here after his dismissal by Louis Quatorze; and, amongst the Italians, Caldari and others. I am not, however, tracing the development of the art in all its branches, but simply that of recitative; and in the works of the authors I have just mentioned, and those

of others I could name, of the same period, I find very little suited to the purpose of our investigation.

But yet it is to an Englishman, in this century, that the palm of honour must be awarded. For in it flourished that most gifted musician, Henry Purcell. Throughout the whole century, no foreign composer wrote in the recitative opera style (if we except the naturalized Frenchman, but by birth Florentine composer, Lulli) who at all approached our own countryman, Purcell. Ransack the whole list of composers of the period which I have chosen for examination, and no German, French, or Italian composer can be found who excelled or equalled him in this branch of the art. It is to the works of Purcell, indeed, we must refer, if we desire to find any rays of *genius* diffused into the recitative and opera style of the seventeenth century.

Purcell seems to have owed his early introduction to fame to the poet Dryden, and through him obtained an opportunity of displaying his talents at a time when, according to Henry Lawes, "the nation was so sated with what was native, that nothing pleased their fancy but what was sung in a language which commonly they understood as little of as they did of the music." Dryden used to have his dramas performed with music composed by Grabut, the Frenchman; but on becoming acquainted with Purcell, he was induced to listen to his idea of what music should express, and the scenes which should

be illustrated in an operatic work. Dryden agreed to produce a drama called *King Arthur*, to which Purcell was to compose the music. This noble opera, or drama with music, was produced in 1690; and it has been well said that the music to "Ye twice ten hundred deities" is the finest example of recitative ever composed in this or any other century. Nothing in the works of Peri, Cacini, Montaverdi, Cesti, Cavalli, Rossi, Stradella, Lulli, or Scarlatti, will bear comparison with it.

I have detailed some incidents in the life of Lulli, showing how highly he was esteemed by Louis Quatorze of France, the honors this monarch conferred on him, and the prosperity which accompanied the royal patronage. Let us enquire if equal honors were conferred on Purcell. Did he enjoy the prosperity attendant on royal patronage? Did royalty condescend to acknowledge in him the might of genius—a genius in which was displayed the highest and most wonderful creative powers? No! Purcell lived and died unrewarded by royal patronage. The royalty of his day preferred the music of Cambert, whom Louis XIV dismissed from France to make way for Lulli. Royalty preferred even the despicable French composer, Grabut, to Purcell; and had not the poetic mind of Dryden felt that in Purcell there was a kindred spirit and love for the beautiful, Purcell might never have produced those compositions which show so fully the power that was in

him. From the union of these two men (Dryden and Purcell) works resulted which can never be forgotten or lost sight of as long as poetry and music are appreciated. Purcell died at the early age of thirty-six; and, though so young, how prolific was his genius! Dryden wrote an ode on his death; but this was the only honour shown to his memory. He was carried to the grave unaccompanied by any national expression of the country's loss—by any national expression of the bereavement the death of a man of genius entails on his country. It might be asked, what national honors do we ever confer on our writers and composers? Scarcely a season passes without an appeal being made to erect a monument, now to this great man and now to another, and it is only when poets, musicians, and literary writers are to be honoured, that the question is mooted, "What is the use of monuments?" Some think the talent this country produces in every branch of art is extra ordinary, and does not require any fostering; but there are some kinds of talent which will not flourish without fostering care—some kinds of talent which may be likened to tender plants, whose roots must strike into a genial soil before they become fruitful. Now, unfortunately, every soil seems more genial to musical composers than English soil. I think this is the cause why this country has failed to rear a succession of great musicians, worthy of carrying on the development of art begun by Purcell, and has allowed other nations to

usurp our supremacy over the art. The investigation of the progress of musical composition in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will show how sadly this country has been eclipsed in creative musical talent; but we may, nevertheless, look back with pride, and claim for our countryman, Henry Purcell, the title of the greatest "musical genius" of the seventeenth century; for, on the authority of Dryden,

> "So ceased the rival crew when Purcell came;
> They sung no more, or sang his fame."

[The succeeding chapters are devoted to remarks on other subjects connected with music, and the continuation of "Form in musical composition" is deferred to another volume.]

CHAPTER IV.

ON TASTE IN MUSIC.

"TASTE in Music," or "Musical Taste," are words which, superficially considered, convey but an imperfect idea of that attribute of the mind which it is universally acknowledged exists, but is so imperfectly understood, much less clearly defined, that, were I to leave the term unexplained, I question whether any one would be prepared to admit that a correct standard whereby to judge of and define musical taste exists at all. It will, therefore, be my aim to try and prove the nature and define something of the character of that standard.

In current phraseology, many persons possess taste in music who are entirely ignorant of the practical part of the art, or its scientific forms; whilst others are proficients in both these respects, who are pronounced totally deficient in musical taste. It is also evident that musical taste manifests itself in some persons, not only in its apparent spontaneity, but also in its ex-

uberance; whilst the total absence of this peculiar attribute is so remarkable in others, that, if we attempt to classify our acquaintances by their musical development, we shall readily discover that they resolve themselves into persons richly endowed, or wholly deficient in musical taste; whilst between these two extremes range all the gradations of intermediate variety that separate them.

As to the source of this mental gift, it will be discovered by observation that, in the general acceptation of the term, taste is a natural endowment, or the result of special organization; and though a taste for music may not in all cases be strongly developed, yet, if it exist at all, though latent in the mind, the slowly refining process of musical training, and familiarity with the best models of the art, will ultimately produce and shape it into that peculiar manifestation of talent which we call a fine musical taste. As an evidence that the faculty of appreciating the sublime and beautiful in music is a natural endowment, I would point to the fact that many accomplished proficients in the theory and practice of music are not only void of it, but that they are absolutely unconscious of their deficiency, and cannot comprehend that they suffer any loss of enjoyment in not possessing it.

In analyzing and attempting to define the nature of the remarkable gift, "Taste in Music," its absence or

presence as idiosyncracies of certain natures should be received as admitted facts. Its source as a natural rather than an acquired faculty must also be allowed as indisputable; for the influence of musical training as a developing process can only be acknowledged as efficient, when nature has supplied the foundation, in a musical organization to work upon.

It is commonly believed that no more reasons can be assigned for our predilections in music, than for the caprices of fashion, the fastidious tastes of the epicure, the prejudices which influence the choice of our associations, or manifest themselves in the form of antipathies and attractions. Now, despite this, generally received opinion, I venture to express my belief that there is a standard by which all the effects that music can produce upon the mind may be adjudicated, and a perfectly reasonable analysis of the varying emotions resulting from its operation, which we call by the generic title of "musical taste," obtained. Nay, more; I think that the little understanding existing on this subject proceeds from the want of a proper appreciation of the true standard of taste in other directions, and its analogical application to music.

I do not believe taste in music to be a mere caprice, or fashion of the hour. I do not deem it an emotion beyond human knowledge, or scientific analysis. Taste, in a figurative sense, has been described in its application to

general subjects, and it needs only the proof that the analogy I have mentioned exists, to accept the descriptions of such writers as Burke, Allison, and others, on taste in general, to convince ourselves that good taste in music is susceptible of the same definition, and the subject of the same strict analysis. According to the best authorities, taste in a figurative sense can *primarily* be described as that faculty of the mind *whereby we perceive whatever is beautiful or sublime in the works of nature, or true to nature in the works of art.*

The poet, painter, sculptor, essayist, and historian, even the mechanic, inventor, sage, and philosopher, all combine to admit that the great archetypes of creation are as perfect in beauty as in use, and that the highest stretch to which the human mind can attain is that which most critically comprehends or most faithfully imitates them. If standards of excellence thus surely exist in mechanics, in the sciences, and all other arts, can music—that master key of the human mind, that chord which strikes the finest and purest note in the soul—alone be exempt from the law of excellence which defines the perfect in every other department of nature? I think not.

Music may be said to be the embodiment of ideas in expressive sounds, the realization of images by tone, and the incarnation of thoughts in the flow of melody, or the combinations of harmony; so that music aims at

depicting nature through sound, as truthfully as the poet, painter, or sculptor, can through their especial means; while the faculty of mind which can interpret these so truthfully, as to realize their approximation to nature, is the "*inner sense*," which we call "taste."

Let us not, however, mistake taste in music for mere sensation. Any person gifted with the power of hearing can be sensationally affected by music; but it is in the character of that sensation that the element of taste is discernible, even as different minds are variously affected by the character of a landscape, which, sensationally (that is, through the organs of sight), all behold alike. Some there are, who, contemplating the aspects of nature, recognize, in the grandeur of the ocean, the giant form of the mountain, the glories of the rising and setting sun, and the pale beauty of the moonlight, scenes which fill the mind with intense admiration, and stir the secret springs of emotion; while others with the same clearness of external vision look upon the same objects with calm indifference, or pass them by regardless of their very existence. Who can question that the opposite effects produced in these cases result from the quickening of an inner sense, which in the one instance links the objects presented to view in a chain of ideas connecting the forms of creation with their divine Author, while in others the external sense of sight alone is moved, the mind is dormant, and perceives no

other relationship to the scene than a perception of its physical characters. Analogically speaking, the various effects of music on various minds produce exactly similar results—sensationally, the mere sounds appeal to each alike; but to the inner sense of one class of minds, new ideas are perceptible, scenes conjured up, embodiments of thought discovered in every phrase; and it is in the faculty of thus appreciating music that the true secret of its charm lies, and a world of indescribable enjoyment is opened up, which constitutes the gift of musical taste. And yet, for the lack of this gift, there are many to whom this realm of delight is closed, who listen to the very music which is capable of calling forth such emotions with scarcely any perception that it differs from the ordinary sounds of routine life, or that it is anything more than a subject for criticism of its external form.

Another evidence of the fact that musical taste depends upon a peculiar *condition* of mind, is to be found in the universal popularity of national music; a class of composition which, entirely irrespective of its scientific merits, appeals to the sentiments of patriotism, or association of ideas connected with it. As an illustration, take the famous Marseillaise Hymn of "Rouget de Lisle." Thrilling as the effect of this composition is to the mind of a Frenchman imbued with the spirit of the idea which it embodies, its performance fails to elicit, in

anything like an equal degree, the same emotion in the mind of one belonging to another nation. From a scientific analysis of the national music of various countries, I think it can be affirmed with safety that the merit which such music possesses is that of conjuring up a train of thought, of a highly emotional character, rendering every peculiarity of its rhythmical movement suggestive of ideas, which find a response in the patriotic heart and imaginative mind.

I will now show how some of the great works of the classical composers appeal to the "internal sense." Take the introduction to Haydn's oratorio of the *Creation*, and analyze the effect produced; for it is a work which appeals to the internal sense in a remarkable manner.

Who that possesses this gift can fail to perceive that the entire epic of creation floated through the mind of the composer, and that his conception realized the stupendous idea of chaos and void, giving birth to a new system, in which order and exquisite form reigned paramount. To ordinary listeners such music has but little charm; but to those gifted with the faculty of "Taste," Haydn's sublime thoughts are portrayed in his music, and clothed with sounds, which carry us through the awful gloom of primeval night into the glorious refulgence of a newly created day, and, through the splendour of the first starlight night of earth's planetary

existence, makes us conversant with the whole history of man's primal state and being.

A similar condition of mind is absolutely necessary to appreciate in its entirety a work which I am happy to say is becoming generally popular; I mean Spohr's symphony, so called, "The Power of Sound." There are many parts of this work which make a direct appeal to an auditory endowed with but a small amount of musical intelligence; but there are other parts which can only be appreciated by those endowed with "Taste"—parts which appeal to the "Inner sense." For instance, the opening movement, descriptive of the awakening of nature from silence into the glorious harmonies of sound. When the internal sense of the auditor is sufficiently awakened, or cultured, as to appreciate the true meaning of this composition, the mind of the poet floats through every phrase of the music, and the thoughts involuntarily shape themselves into the words :—

In loneliness the young world lay,
Amid Spring's vernal glow;
Man unenlightened trod his way
Its silent pictures through;
Wild impulse still his only guide,
His heart as yet unstrung,
For him love's language was untried,
And nature had no tongue.
Almighty goodness now the spell unbound,
And breathed into the human breast in sound;
Love found a voice its magic to express,
And whispered in man's heart its power to bless.

The nightingale her greeting chanted high;
The forest murmured forth its harmony.
Zephyr first waked the sigh within his breast;
The purling fountain lulled him into rest.

Now the music of the opening words of this symphony, although so pregnant with ideas to the highly developed mind, is so slightly sensational in its character, that upon many persons it produces no other effect than a realization of its being a mere abstract introductory movement, to which no special meaning is attached.

Another striking evidence of the internal nature of "Musical Taste" is to be found in considering the deeply emotional effect of religious music on those who have had their minds awakened to the influence of religion. So sensational are parts of Handel's oratorios (for instance, the choruses in the *Messiah*, *Israel in Egypt*, and other works), that the Christian and the Pagan can alike be affected by them; but there are other parts which appeal only to a Christian sentiment, and require, in order to be appreciated, that the mind be imbued with a certain religious fervour. Take, for instance, the air, "He was despised and rejected of men." To the devout Christian, this simple sentence alone embodies the most profoundly touching sentiment of religious belief; indeed the whole oratorio conveys to the Christian auditor the stupendous ideas of divine love, human redemption, infinite perfection in life, and infinite mercy in death; it appeals to the deepest of all.

human emotions, the religious sentiment, and the finest of all perceptive faculties, viz. "musical taste;" although many parts would fall flat and meaningless, perhaps even irksome, upon the ear of a Budhist, or Mahometan.

I will now call attention to other sources of gratification derivable from music, which do not emanate from the exercise of the "internal sense."

"Taste" in general, besides being an "internal sense," has been described as the *joint exercise of perception and judgment*, on the ground that many objects fail to produce their full effect unless they can critically satisfy the judgment. Another definition of taste declares that there are many objects which, though deficient in some qualities which satisfy the judgment, yet appeal with such force to the imagination, that they suggest to the mind all the ideas which excite the pleasurable emotions resulting in "taste."

The question naturally arises, "Is there any kind of music capable of exciting mental emotion in an auditor who may be wholly deficient in the internal sense of taste, and yet who, by the exercise of judgment, can derive gratification from the composition?" I believe that there is; and in proof thereof I would cite that form of composition called "Fugue and Canon," the order and arrangement of which is peculiarly adapted to realize the emotion I have described, as resulting solely from the exercise of perception in musical science, and judgment in musical art.

Musical compositions in the form of fugue and canon consist of a phrase or idea which, when started, is repeated in different parts, in alternating positions of a key, and elaborated with various combinations, whilst the phrase is preserved in a direct form. This class of composition, heard by the trained musician, whether he be gifted with the internal sense of taste or no—provided he be instructed to perceive the progression of the phrase and is capable of pronouncing judgment on the correctness with which it has been elaborated—is capable of affording a degree of gratification equal in intensity to the most exquisite perceptions of the internal sense, but wholly incomprehensible to the uninitiated. Now, I do not mean to assert that the fugue and canon are entirely destitute of interest to the uninstructed listener, or that there are no fugues in which a sufficient amount of sensational element can be found to gratify a general auditory; but I maintain that the principal charm of that form of composition is derived from a study of the art of counterpoint, and chiefly appeals to the erudite musician, who is acquainted with the artistic method developed in the work, and who realizes the satisfaction derived from his judgment being called into activity.

Of course it will be understood that the exercise of this faculty requires for its object a masterpiece of art, and admits of modification only in judging of the two classes of fugues to which I have referred; viz. the sensational and the purely scientific. As illustrations

of one form, I may mention the fugues of Bach, Handel, Mozart, Mendelssohn, and some other composers, many of whose works command admiration as much by their sensational beauty as by the wondrous ability displayed in their construction; whilst from the other class of fugue writers I might quote with propriety the names of Lucca de Marenzio, Füx, Orlando de Lassus, Giovanni Urnani, Manuel Gardoso, and last, but not least, Palestrina, with others of a contemporaneous period, to prove that some minds (especially such as derive intense gratification from the study of this kind of music) can only be satisfied through the science and forms of scholastic method, wholly unrelieved by that sensational beauty which chiefly appeals to the imagination.

I venture, therefore, to reaffirm my assertion, that a fine taste in music is a quality of mind which may exist wholly independent of scholasticism; but that its possession, derived through a natural gift of organization, when refined, instructed and fully developed by cultivation, combines the faculty of taste with the additional advantage of judgment, and is thus enabled to appreciate the beauty as well as the scientific excellence of music; while a merely scientific appreciation of music, uncombined with natural taste, may fully recognize the exactitude and method exhibited in composition, but can never comprehend the exquisite gratification which that mind receives from the works of musical genius when

listened to through the medium of a finely organized ear, developed into critical judgment by correct musical training. In individuals thus highly favoured, we may truly say we discover the possession of "a fine taste in music."

CHAPTER V.

"TASTE IN MUSIC."

(Continued.)

HAVING, in the preceding chapter, attempted briefly to analyze that subtle quality of mind which is popularly known in its effects as a fine taste in music, I proceed to consider the third definition of taste. The first being that natural gift, or organic endowment, which enables its possessor to appreciate the true and beautiful in music independently of scientific training; the second, the happy combination of endowment and attainment—a natural gift and a musical education; while the third may be defined as the effect of the imagination, whose activity, perceiving the idea intended in a design, suffers its perceptions to supply deficiencies, which would else offend the judgment. As an illustration of this definition of "taste," reference is made to certain works of art, which, whilst acknowledged to be *chef-d'œuvres* of sculpture, can only be said to be perfect in a limited sense. Such are the Farnese Hercules, the Gladiators in the Palace

of Chigi, and the Apollo Belvidere. Although it is true the very mention of these highly admired works of art suggests an excellence that, to many, seems synonymous with perfection; yet we have the authority of Sir Joshua Reynolds for asserting that none of these figures represent the human form in its full perfection. Indeed, to the mind, undirected by the peculiar kind of taste I am considering, there is no doubt these sculptures constantly inspire feelings of disappointment and surprise; but to the beholder who views them through the medium of taste, the imagination perceives embodied in the statues the special attributes they were designed to represent, and their latent and subtle excellencies are rendered apparent: the Hercules becomes the representation of muscular strength; the Gladiators spring into life as the embodiments of matchless activity; whilst the Apollo fills the mind with conceptions of grace and ideal beauty far transcending even that which the mere external image presents. It is, then, as suggestive of the attributes of strength, activity, and grace, that the images become *chef-d'œuvres;* but they only become so to the mind which apprehends historically the characteristics of the Hercules, Gladiator and Apollo, and to the imagination which can detect those characteristics portrayed in the statues.

How many musical compositions could I mention which require an interpretation founded on precisely the same quality of taste which discovers the peculiar

merits of these statues! I cannot cite the music of Meyerbeer as illustrative of an excellence equal in degree to that which has immortalized the works of sculpture I have named; nor would I think it judicious to array the venerated antiquities of Greek art against any productions of modern times; but I find that the same "character of mind" that can, by the exercise of imagination, discover the ideal beauties of statuary only half-revealed in execution, is necessary to appreciate many musical compositions of our own time; chief amongst which are *Les Huguenots*, *Le Prophète*, *L'Africaine*, and other productions of their justly esteemed composer. Nearly all Meyerbeer's music is suggestive of ideas which fail in actual musical representation; and therefore he presents us with a species of composition only capable of satisfying the judgment through the exercise of the imagination. Admitting that position, Meyerbeer's music cannot fully satisfy the critic. In its appeal to the action of the "internal sense," which requires an idea so obviously represented in the music that it matters not whether the listener be instructed in the science or not, Meyerbeer's music proves unsatisfactory; but when we admit that judgment may pronounce a verdict in favour of that which the imagination fills up, the compositions of Meyerbeer become eminently calculated to please; and whilst they but half satisfy the judgment, they are well adapted to find favour with the ideal and imaginative.

In the works of this composer, moreover, there is another remarkable feature. The passions of the human mind, such as love, hatred, fear, anger, and revenge, are all suggested by the music, though none of them are, or could be, actually so portrayed as to be manifest in its phraseology. That the passions can be even suggested, is an evidence of the composer's genius; and such music appeals to the peculiar quality of taste I have been describing, and may aptly be characterized as "the imaginative."

Believing that the study of music as a science is becoming one of the popular and distinctive features of the time, and consequently that a fair share of any promiscuous auditory is sufficiently instructed to pronounce upon the scientific form of a musical composition with some degree of judgment, we may account for the remarkable amount of favor with which many compositions of our own time are received, by ascribing their success to this imaginative quality of mind, which, filling up the imperfect outlines of ideality suggested by music, satisfies the judgment (in spite of the want of scientific form) by the peculiar gratification it affords to the "taste." In fact, the same quality of mind which discovers excellencies of ideal beauty in statuary, painting, poetry, and other works of art, which as models are pronounced by severe criticism to be imperfect, is that which, analogically applied to music, overlooks its defects of form for the sake of the imaginative graces which

become elaborated to embodied ideas beneath the influence of this fertile quality of the mind. Now, if, after a candid consideration of the propositions I have set forth, it is admited that taste is susceptible of analysis and reducible to classification, the result will be the establishment of a true and satisfactory standard, by which judicious criticism may be regulated, and to which all descriptions of music may be referred; and the value of such a standard in music will be found quite equal to that which pronounces an authoritative verdict in any other direction of art; enabling us to determine what compositions are meretricious, and what valuable as educators of a correct popular taste. It dethrones the senseless and imperious tyrant, "fashion," from its empire over the public mind—an empire most commonly based upon some fleeting and adventitious circumstance or prejudice of the hour, to be succeeded by another caprice, equally unreasonable; and substitutes in its place a sublime and ennobling science, which, based upon the mind's capacity for appreciating the beautiful and true in nature, establishes its standard upon the connection between pure and refined emotions and fundamental principles of science.

Having reviewed that subtle and refined attribute of mind which we call "fine taste," I will now point to its opposite, and briefly discuss the injurious tendency of that class of music which bases its claim to popular favor only on the appeal it makes to the senses, through

that which most generally affects them; viz. "rhythmical measure," and strongly marked accentuation. It is a well-ascertained fact, that all nations, as they emerge from barbarism into civilization, represent their progression in the development of art and science; so that the attainments of a people may be taken as a certain standard of national growth and civilization.

As the lowest conditions of barbarism furnish us with evidences of a species of noise called by courtesy *national music*, it is a subject of curious inquiry to find out what the characteristics of such noise may be. There is no doubt it chiefly consists in a strongly marked species of accentuation, and a passionate delight in rhythmical measure. We may presume, then, that the love of "rhythmical measure" is one of the fundamental attributes of a sensuous condition of the mind; and when we find, in civilized communities, devotion to a class of music which possesses little, if any other, claim to appreciation, I think we are not far wrong in determining that such a character of "taste" does not rise many degrees beyond that of a Chinaman, who, with the monotonous and regular beat of his "tom tom," beguiles himself into the belief that he listens to celestial music; or the Hindoo, Turk, or Fetish worshipper of Africa, with whom any strongly accented tones, produced by instruments of resonance, will excite the mind to the wildest degree of phrenzy. And yet, wherein lies the difference in the delight of the civilized man for the

same kind of music? Simply that one derives his gratification from one or two tones only, whilst the other revels in the varieties afforded by popular dance music, such as polkas and galops. Is the stuff heard at promenade concerts under some such title as the "Volunteer Waltz," or the "Kiss me quick" galop, really superior to barbaric music in any way except in its variety? And do certain persons, when reproached for their lack of appreciation of the works of Mozart, Beethoven, or Mendelssohn, in trying to redeem their character for musical taste, by asserting that they enjoy a good polka tune, and that they delight in keeping time to the beat of the drum in military music, really show that they possess any greater amount of "taste" than a Chinaman, or an Ojibaway Indian?

For my own part, I respect the taste of the one quite as much as I do that of the other. I once heard a remark in connection with this subject, which I do not think inappropriate to mention here. "I should like to be a 'Chinese' (said a person with whom I was conversing), in order to *appreciate* the delight they appear to feel in their music."

It was evident to me that the speaker in this case fully realized the fact that music can only be appreciated through certain mental emotions, and depends for its effect upon particular qualities of the mind to which the music appeals; and although I respect the perception manifest in the remark, it does not change my opinion

as to the merits of Chinese music; nor yet my definition, that, like all other music deficient in the elements which appeal to the true standard of taste, it can become acceptable only through the effect of that marked accentuation which never fails to satisfy the unrefined conditions of mere sensuous taste. Let it be understood, I do not disclaim the existence of great excellence in music simply because it is clothed in marked rhythmical measure. I do not deny that the finest musical taste may derive gratification in listening to strongly accented music of any description, from the military march to the waltz; nay, more: I admit that many composers of indisputable genius have embodied delightful fancies, exquisite imaginings, and correct methods, in the measure of the dance and martial tread; but rhythmical music can so easily realize its aim of pleasing with no other aid than that of its inevitable appeal to the senses, that the chief number of these compositions (of modern times at least) do not seem to aspire to the gratification of any higher qualities of the mind.

These arguments, if applied indiscriminately, would, I am aware, cast undeserved censure upon many compositions of "fine taste," simply because they are written in rhythmical measure. For instance, the noble marches of Handel, Mozart, Mendelssohn, and other composers of the highest eminence, might be denounced merely on account of their rhythmical measure, and be obnoxious

to the charge of bad taste. The charming music of Chopin would also be included in this sweeping condemnation. But let it be understood, that beautiful ideas are not changed or destroyed by being clothed in the external garment of rhythmical measure; even as Chopin's compositions, though wreathed into the accented forms of "dance music," are still fragrant with graceful ideality, and so redolent of the peculiar idiosyncracies of Polish character, that the monotony of rhythmical accent is forgotten in the variety and ideality of the work, thus refining the taste by its beauty, and satisfying the *tasteless* by its strong accentuation; so that the sensuous mind that would fail to discover the least charm in a concerto by Beethoven, and would pronounce Mendelssohn a "bore," becomes allured by the external character of Chopin's waltzes to some perception of the ideal beauty which they embody.

I do not condemn rhythmical music, then, simply because it is so; I only dislike it when it is little or nothing else. Nor do I censure popular taste for admiring it, except when popular taste is unable to appreciate any other kind. I consider that the highest powers of the mind may administer to the gratification of that which is far beneath itself, and that without a loss of power, or sacrifice of genius. We find Mozart, in his opera *Die Zauberflöte*, captivating the popular ears of the Viennese by his birdcatcher's music, yet rising to the highest

flights of genius in the music allotted to the Priest in the same opera. A similar evidence of versatility combined, with excellence in this renowned composer is exhibited between the exquisite arias and the buffo music in *Don Giovanni;* whilst the composer of *Elijah* descends with grace and ease from the pedestal of sublimity, which his magnificent oratorios have shown was natural to him, to write the delightful scherzo in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* music, and the strongly accented and admirable *Wedding March.*

Finally, I wish to remark that whatever attraction there may be to some minds in gaining popularity at the expense of a sacrifice of principle, a true adherence to a pure standard ultimately results in an enduring "fame." Many contemporaries of the great masters, Handel, Haydn, and Mozart, wrote quite as much music, quite as many operas and concerted works as they did; and yet their compositions are almost entirely forgotten, their names now almost unknown, and even their very existence well nigh lost in the night of oblivion. This will be the fate of every ephemeral work and every ephemeral workman, who labours with no higher aim than that of gratifying the ever-changing caprice of popular opinion—false, fleeting fashion. I denounce such music, not merely as a waste of human energy and evidence of misdirected efforts, but also as injurious to the progress of a refined musical taste; for, by pandering to that which gratifies the senses alone, I consider

that the unintellectual and tasteless musician commits a positive wrong to the public mind, which it is his duty to educate by presenting such compositions as will realize the noblest aims of music: viz. the embodiment of the true, the sublime, the beautiful, and the holy, in those grand harmonies of sound, that subtle and exquisite form of speech, intoned in music, the just appreciation of which forms the attribute of a "fine musical taste."

CHAPTER VI.

ON CONVENTIONALISM IN MUSIC.

It is an universally received aphorism that "extremes are ever neighbours;" an universally acknowledged truth that all things in nature range between two antagonistic principles. Thus virtue is recognised as the opposite to vice, cold to heat, light to darkness, order to disorder, reality to fiction—all these represent the universality of antagonistic principles, amongst which, and as clearly marked, I believe, as any that I have quoted, I find that the antagonistic principles in the arts and sciences are, the true and beautiful on the one hand, and "conventionalism" on the other.

Conventionalism is not, as I define it, conservatism. Conservatism, although it is an opponent of progress, and often a foe to improvement, is still the friend of truth; when it errs, it generally does so by maintaining something that is really good in itself; and, though excessive conservatism represses aspiration and stultifies progress, it is valuable as a safeguard to truth,

and a restraint to the inroads of error, caprice, and folly. But conventionalism is a mere fashion, or custom of thought, which is just as often based upon false as upon true principles. It very frequently originates in some adventitious circumstance, the folly of the hour, the prejudice of some leading mind, or a bias given by popular opinion, which at last terminates in the tyranny of conventionalism. I do not mean that conventionalism never honours the good and true, or that it is invariably opposed to excellence; but I maintain that conventional habits of thought are generally unreasonable, and that their tyranny over the popular mind is almost always injurious to good sense and the high development of that truth and beauty which are the chief end and aim of art.

It is on account of the manifest injury which conventionalism has inflicted on the art of music, that I select it as the subject of my present remarks. Conventionalism, I am aware, has been, and can be, exercised for good; but it is because it as often sanctions and perpetuates evil, that I would urge its dethronement, in favour of the exercise of that reason and judgment which, when based upon right principles, need not resort to conventionalism to produce conclusions. Besides, it is so frequently found perpetuating the *false* instead of the *true*, that I am confident its pernicious effects far counterbalance its good. For instance, the apologists of conventionalism urge that it is an agreement for the

public weal; and that, in the intercourse of society, the conventional courtesies of life are valuable and good; but it cannot be denied that they are just as often false, hypocritical and treacherous, and that the pleasure they afford would be far better supplied by the genuine kindness of the human heart, and that natural tendency to hospitality and courtesy existing among the truly great. Moreover, it is an acknowledgment that, if virtue be unattainable, its counterfeit should be substituted. Again, it is urged that conventionalism sustains the reputation of the great and good, who would otherwise be forgotten by an ungrateful posterity; that, for example, the great poet, Milton, is conventionally admired by thousands who are totally incapable of individually comprehending or appreciating the worth of his writings. To my mind this is no argument in favour of perpetuating a tyrannical and false system of exercising criticism. The author of *Paradise Lost* will always appeal to the master minds of every age for an admiration which is sufficiently marked and powerful to enshrine his name in the roll of immortality, and requires not the insensate testimony of mere conventionalism. The utmost conventionalism has done in this instance has been to restrain the self-styled literary critics of the day from launching out against the "Old Puritan," as he has been designated by political animosity, and exceeding, perhaps, even the vituperation of Dr. Johnson against his "vernal fertility, prolixity,

and verbosity;" for such were the obnoxious phrases hurled at one whose genius raised him above the herd of his assailants; but if his memory is shielded by conventionalism from the abuse of those whose opinions are worthless, it can never add one jot to the admiration of those who have sense to perceive, and judgment to comprehend, the noble flights of his rare and sublime genius. Again, it is justly asserted, that there is a class of musicians (most of them disciples of the young German school) who, were it not for the conventional respect shown to the sacred oratorios of Handel, would openly express their repudiation of the sublimity of his works, and seek to uproot our almost national Handelian taste, by their cynical criticisms and overweening partiality for music of their own transcendental school. If conventionalism alone preserved Handel in the hearts of the English nation, we might well afford to bow before its shrine and thank it for at least one act of justice; but, as in the case of Milton, Shakespeare, and the glorious host of the Elizabethan fathers of poesy, as well as the yet later masters of musical art, I have too much respect for human nature, too high an opinion of human sense and perception of the true and beautiful, to believe that great and transcendent genius owes anything to conventionalism as an element of enduring fame. "The beautiful never dies;" and though great geniuses may be indebted to some accident or fortuitous circumstance for their introduction to public notice, no class of men can maintain

a hold upon human respect, nor retain a sway over the master minds of succeeding ages, like the poets I have alluded to, and such musicians as we now honour in the generic title of the "great masters," without a far more worthy and enduring base for the pedestal of immortal genius than mere conventional admiration. Milton, Shakespeare, Pope, Dryden, Addison, Steele, Ben Jonson, and their fellow workers, will live as long as man can appreciate writing whose fire was Promethean and stolen from heaven. The strophes of Purcell, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Spohr, and others equally illustrious, will be chanted through popular lips, and be echoed through future eras of civilization, when the poet and musician of mere conventional admiration shall be known, neither in voice nor page, verse nor tone, amongst the posterity of those who worshipped them through the blind guidance of conventionalism.

But it is chiefly in the realm of the arts, and especially of the musical art, that conventionalism depraves the taste and destroys with antagonistic perversity the true and beautiful. I cannot too strenuously enforce that genuine excellence does not need conventionalism to sustain it; and, granted that the great mass of mankind either does not, or cannot, think for itself, but pronounces judgment on what it is "conventional" to admire and sanction, I still affirm that the same pernicious spirit most commonly endorses that which is

false, and that which has accidentally or fortuitously been forced into public notice; that it legalises by "general agreement," or endorses by unreasoning popular opinion, ideas and objects which are constantly discovered to be worthless, and absolutely wrong; and thus time is wasted, whilst the conventional idol reigns, and still more serious injury is perpetrated by a perversion of truth, which, as I shall show you in the case of music, becomes sacrificed at the shrine of a false and pernicious tyrant. I am confident every art has suffered, and still suffers, under its infliction, though in a less degree than in music; but that I may not be accused of exaggeration, I will mention a few examples, and show how the architect, painter, and sculptor have suffered through conventionalism.

The architect urges that conventional taste in his art has constantly retarded its progress, and perpetually substituted a style abounding with objections, for the graceful, useful, natural and therefore beautiful. Without giving a detail of mere technicalities, I might refer to many authorities on the subject, to show that almost all the buildings of the middle and later periods have been erected and adorned (or rather disfigured) in obedience to the conventional idea that symbolisms, geometrical figures and rules, mere mathematics, or florid and often grotesque mixtures of various styles, represented true art. The stern simplicity of the Ionic and Doric, the florid beauty of the Corinthian, and the chaste elegance

of the Tuscan orders of architecture, need no conventional dogmas to excite our admiration or challenge our approval. The splendid Arabesque and Moriscan styles, the noble Gothic and pure Saxon, are all distinctive and representative of their times and people, all suggestive of use, beauty, genius, and adaptation. Too many noble examples of all these exist—are imitated, eulogized and admired—to leave room for a doubt that the really judgmatical and refined mind needs no popular cry to stimulate it to pronounce a verdict of "excellence;" but if you will accept the testimony of the architect himself, you will find that periods have occurred in which all these noble models have been sacrificed to the absurdities of what is called the "renaissance" style, the tasteless deformities of the Georgian period, or the strange and often grotesque *resumé* of all ages and none commingled of our own time, denominated "Gothic," but really unallied to it in its attributes of beauty and usefulness.

It is generally acknowledged that the noblest models of the sculptor's art still date back to the Grecian era. Why is this? Has not the mind of man, in his conquest over the elements and the achievements of science in every other direction, stamped the age with the incontrovertible signs of progress? Has sculpture stood still or retrograded since the days of the Grecian era? The sculptor answers that genius cannot contend with the determined conventionalism which has substituted

"dead dogmas" (called rules of art) for living nature. Conventionalism determines that a certain law, promulgated by Aristotle as an "æsthetic law" (but never intended to supersede the yet more admirable rules which can only grow out of a close observation of nature), must be observed, whether nature and its living inspiration be sacrificed or not. Aristotle has laid down as three essential rules of beauty, "order," "symmetry," and the "definite." Conventional worship of Aristotle has seized upon these three definitions, and determined that nature should conform to them in the strictest letter of the law, or else be sacrificed. Nature, always exalting herself above the formalism of any mere set of external rules which have no regard to her ever various, mobile, and exquisite appeals to the feelings as well as the judgment, has been at last obliged to succumb to dogma. The sympathetic and almost living beauty of the Athenian, Florentine, and Venetian schools of art have been "crowded out" by "formalism," "line and measure;" and the art of the sculptor is comparatively dead, or can only be galvanized into life by some determined innovator, who uses the sword of genius and the shield of living nature to slay the tyrant —"Conventionalism."

Turn to the testimony of the painter on the subject of conventionalism. The art of painting may be almost considered modern in comparison to others; but even here the hand of conventionalism has overlaid the canvass

of the artist with its destroying rust and its corrupting mould. The painter aims at representing living nature on his canvass. To do this truthfully, nature must not only be imitated in external semblance, but, as faithfully as may be, represented by those indescribable touches of genius which can no more be reduced to formula than the human countenance can depict varying emotions in a state of placid repose. A great writer on art has remarked, that, besides the necessity of representing "truth," there exists for the artist a great collateral necessity; viz. "*That of the visible operation of the human intellect in the presentation of truth.*" Now conventionalism insists upon the representation of truth in art, but fails to define what is "truth;" hence it has narrowed down "genius" to the mere presentation of copies, and most vociferously applauds those who prove themselves to be the best imitators, whilst the infinite varieties of nature and the power of mind to embody these in the indescribable essence of all art, viz. "genius," finds no favour with conventionalism, unless that same genius cramps itself down to mere imitation. Perhaps the best friend of the artist in this respect, and the best reproof that "conventionalism" in painting has ever suffered, is being daily exhibited in the art of photography, applied to taking likenesses, which, whilst it is the most truthful of all imitators, too often proves its most certain caricaturist, and that from the very fact that it only effects what conventionalism demands

in art; viz. to imitate the original with fidelity; but it almost inevitably omits that higher range of art which belongs only to human intellect, viz. to represent mind and embody genius.

I think I have said enough to prove that conventionalism deserves the rank I have assigned it in the arts of architecture, sculpture, and painting, as the antagonist of beauty and the foe of truth; and were I to pursue my analysis throughout the whole realm of nature, I am confident I should only add to, without in the least changing, the substance of my proposition.

I have already stated that any injury which this fatal characteristic of foolish criticism might inflict upon other arts and sciences was far exceeded in the wrong done to music; and it now remains for me to prove this assertion by an analysis of its action in this direction.

People are so accustomed to judge of music merely from the standard of conventionalism, and, through that pernicious method of passing opinions, to assume that everything is correct which they have been in the habit of calling so, that the majority of any audience, popularly called musical in their proclivities, but not scientifically instructed in the art, would be astonished to be informed that all existing systems of intonation—that is, the adopted arrangement of tones, or relationship existing between them—are false and untrue to nature; and that the sounds which they hear in the most popular

musical compositions are but imperfect representations of those which nature demands and is capable of producing.

In the succession of sounds called a Diatonic Scale, the relationship of one note to another should be true to nature; that is to say, there should be such a succession and such a number of sounds between a given sound and its octave as would enable the constructor of a keyed instrument to arrange the sounds true to nature; but this, with the limited number of tones which conventionalism has adopted, it is impossible to do. Very few of the sounds are, therefore, true to nature; *i. e.* properly related to each other; and the musical ear which is satisfied with this unnatural relationship can only become so by false training. This is absolutely the case, and conventionalism sanctions the outrage, still but few persons take heed of the defect inherent in our musical system. It is true that players on stringed instruments have a chance of correcting this defect, and by the aid of a fine ear can and do make use of certain sounds that have no representation in musical notation; but performers on instruments with fixed tones are necessarily bound within their range of notes, and not only must themselves produce false sounds, but injure the ear, outrage nature, and oblige voices and stringed instruments to conform to their imperfect intonation.

This conventional system has grown into too widely-

spread an evil to admit of any possibility of correction. It has of necessity been adopted by all the composers of whom we have any published works, besides regulating the construction of far too many thousands of instruments having fixed tones, to render it in the least possible to effect any radical change in a given period of time. The last phase of this system has developed itself into what we call the "equal temperament system." The plan is this:- "Any one of the semitones introduced between a sound and its octave is taken as the sound to begin with, and the same system of intervals is made to occur between that note and its octave; for the vibrations of the semitones are successively increased, not by the same number of additional vibrations, as in the division of the monochord, but by such constantly increasing number as preserve an equality in the ratios of the semitones; the measure of pitch is in each semitone therefore the same." It is this system of which Colonel Perronet Thompson, in his work on the Enharmonicon of the Ancients, published about fifteen years ago, speaks: "Instead of being considered the crowning invention of musical skill, it should be viewd as a lazy attempt to save trouble." "It is like making a telescope one length for all eyes and distances, or making the fingers of a statue of one medium size." The arrangement is indeed a most bungling one, and entirely false to nature, which determines that the interval between certain consecutive tones and half tones in a scale

should be greater than that between others; a fact which is constantly demonstrated by the natural inflexions of the voice, guided by a good ear, or the tones true to nature produced by sensitive violin players, in spite of the training they receive under the equal temperament system. Of course there are ears as insensible to these deficiencies as there are eyes which have not the perception of colours. To these it is indifferent whether they make use of chromatic or achromatic lenses in a telescope. To the sensitive, however, this marked defect in the musical tones of a fine keyed instrument is essentially painful; while, to all, its tendency is to perpetuate the false by falsely educating the popular ear. It has been proved by experience that a sensitive ear can detect the difference of tone in two notes varying according to measurement in less even than the tenth of a "comma." Now, in forming a diatonic scale on the equal temperament system, the variations from the absolutely true amount often to as much as eight or nine times the number of variations the ear is capable of appreciating. Good artists have not been wanting to deplore the use of this system. The celebrated Madame Mara condemned the use of the pianoforte in the cultivation of the voice, because its fixed tones inevitably jarred against those supplied by her sensitive ear in vocalization; and the best singers realize most painfully that the violin alone can be judiciously used as an aid to their exercises for practice.

Viotti, the great violinist of the day, testified to the fact, that, in order to play perfectly in tune and satisfy the demands of an ear attuned to the harmonies of nature, it is necessary to use a greater number of sounds than those laid down in musical notation; but the use of which, joined to those produced by an instrument with fixed tones, would render the combination intolerable. No experience, says the author of the article "Temperament," in Rees's *Encyclopædia*, has yet demonstrated that the human voice sings tempered tones even in accompaniment to tempered instruments, by which it is affirmed that good singers can only become so when they sing in spite of conventional systems—within which nature is sacrificed; outside of which, conventionalism would, if it could, sacrifice their reputation; for conventionalism is, I must add, as unjust as it is tyrannical. It first lays down laws which are almost invariably antagonistic to reason; and then, in defiance of reason, it uses conventional criticism to decry those who dare to overleap its dictum. So that I conclude by declaring that I am as opposed to conventionalism in every form, as conventionalism is opposed to truth and beauty. I am opposed to conventionalism in architecture, because it palms off on the public, incongruities, only sanctioned by itself, for noble models which require to be endorsed by conventionalism. I denounce it in sculpture, as a paralysis of genius and a foe to progress. I protest against it in painting, as a base imitator of dead art,

and a knife which cuts the throat of living art. But above all, and beyond all, I denounce it in music, for the many wrongs it has inflicted on the art, chief of which is its having forced our great composers to write for a "key-board," which we now know to be made on a false system, but to which we must adhere, or lose the fruits of the geniuses that accommodated themselves to that system, and forced it on posterity by leaving so many musical monuments of immortal beauty and worth.

CHAPTER VII.

ON CONVENTIONALISM IN MUSIC.

(Continued.)

In continuation of the subject of the preceding chapter, namely, the withering effects which conventionalism has exercised on the progress of musical art, I would now call attention to some of the evils consequent upon such a system of judgment, as it appears upon the progress of music in past ages and our own time.

My denunciation of conventionalism involves two principles: first, the demand which it makes upon individual minds for just and rightful judgment, independent of the habitual custom of conforming to popular opinion, which, in its aggregate, is too often mere conventionalism; and secondly, the stern necessity which this system of individual criticism would bind upon the public generally to cultivate its taste, compelling musicians, artists and composers, to aim at constantly increasing excellence, and musical critics to

comprehend thoroughly that which they profess to write about analytically. Hence the downfall of conventionalism would be the inauguration of a new era of progress for music; and hence it is that—pending the retributive justice which I anticipate will eventually dethrone this usurping Tyrant of the age, and substitute in its place the free and unfettered right of individual judgment—I have raised my voice against its pernicious sway, and have shown that conventionalism has dogmatized most injuriously against progress in every art, but more than all others in that of music; and I would call attention to one or two of the most salient points in illustration of my assertion.

It is a strange and somewhat humiliating subject of remark, that, even from the very earliest periods of musical art, conventionalism has laid its palsying hand upon all attempts of the human mind to ultimate progress in this direction. Rude and even barbarous as must have been the earliest efforts of the ancient musician to weave his thoughts into the harmonious measure of music—vast as is the gulf which in the lapse of centuries the musician must have had to bridge over with constant effort, ere musical art could have attained its present pitch of perfection—we may imagine something of the warfare which must have been waged with the demon of conventionalism, age after age, when we find it recorded that, even in the earliest days of the Greek Lyric Drama, it sat like an incubus on the pro-

gress of musical art, checking its development with such ruthless and unreasoning sway, that no sooner had an instrument or musical idea fought its way into popular appreciation and received the sanction of public approval, than conventionalism fastened its fangs upon it, determined that it was *the thing* and the *only thing;* and every musician who presumed to add a new note, or innovate a fresh idea, was denounced as a "Charlatan," and either compelled to rein in his genius to the narrow confines wherein conventionalism had said "Thus far shalt thou go, but no farther," or fight the unequal battle of the ages, in which truth, beauty, nature, light and genius are ever arrayed against conventionalism.

Besides the great primary wrong of the "equal temperament system," sanctioned by conventionalism, its effect upon the art has been to array the weakest and worst specimens of musical composition against the grandest and most sublime; and further, it has had a fatal effect on the development of native talent in this country. In fact, it has almost driven English genius out of the field of musical composition, until we have scarcely a shadow left of an English school of music at all.

A still greater evil than this has arisen from the same source. The void which conventional tyranny has left in the absence of an English school of music has been filled up in the supply which so decidedly musical

a people as the English demand, by inundating the public with foreign music and foreign artists, including, of course, many of the most objectionable features of the several schools of art introduced; the conventionally sanctioned admiration for foreign music admitting little or no discrimination, or judgment, in our broadcast system of foreign musical patronage.

The result is obvious. Conventionalism, formerly contented with making war upon *individuals* bold enough to overleap the trammels which it had set about genius, now carries on warfare against a nation. Formerly it denounced, magisterially, individual excellence wherever found, whenever it originated aught that was opposed to its established formula; now it pushes its tyrannical dictum to the very point of exterminating a national school of music amongst a whole people. It is time that a final appeal should be made from what is false to what is true. Such an appeal might, and I believe would, be successful, were it not that the seat of public judgment has been usurped by conventionalism. Future generations will read with scornful pity of the self-styled musical critics whose oracular verdict on Mendelssohn pronounced him to be an "excrescence on the German school of music;" whilst the musical critics of this country would not even listen to a symphony of Schumann's, and heaped vituperations of no measured kind upon his head. In the one country, Mendelssohn was pronounced to be far

superior to Schumann; in the other, Schumann was nowhere at all.

Truth in art and progress, inevitably developed by time, has come to the rescue in both instances: each composer is now known for his own peculiar excellence; and posterity has placed Mendelssohn where he belongs, amongst a mighty race of bright immortals, whilst the unquestionable but unequal merits of Schumann are quite as fully recognized as they deserve.

The warfare which conventionalism wages in individual cases like this, time is sure to decide in favour of the right. Posterity never hesitates between the combatants; and though in their time they suffer artistic martyrdom, when conventionalism arrays a Geminiani against a Handel, a Piccini against a Gluck, a Salieri against a Mozart, and a Verdi against a Rossini, it needs but the calm and unprejudiced verdict of time and reason to enshrine the real Maestri in the grateful memories of an admiring posterity, and to consign the temporary rivals (whom capricious and unreasoning prejudice strive in vain to elevate into the place they cannot fill) to the obscurity to which they belong. But all this is the mighty strife in which genius is ever called upon to engage; and it would almost seem as if, in this, as in every other instance, the wreath of immortal fame must be grown from the crown of martyrdom; but it is another and far less endurable evil when conventionalism sends its shafts of destruction right into

the very heart of a nation's genius; and when it undertakes to say that no one of English birth and origin can write good music, or sing, or execute without a foreign education, it closes the avenues of competition against an English school, and then reprobates that which it has dogmatized out of being, because it has no existence. This evil, then, becomes a national one; and it behoves us to inquire why this country suffers the great reproach of being the only civilized nation that has no acknowledged school of music. To my mind the cause is a fundamental one, and the poverty of musical genius, said to prevail in this country, is mainly due to the absence of a genuine love of art; the cold indifference of the public taste for any English musical works; the conventional opinion that music can only be generated in the German, Italian, or French schools; and the palsy on musical taste which the long habit of judging only through conventionalism has inflicted on English people generally. Analyze the nature of musical attraction amongst an English audience, and you will find a lamentable deficiency of any other influence but that of conventionalism. It is conventional, and therefore inevitable, to admire the Oratorios of Handel, Mendelssohn, and other great composers. To pass an unfavourable criticism on the Symphonies of Mozart, Beethoven, and other celebrated masters, would be to write down such a critic, as ignorant of what it is in these days strictly in conventional good taste to admire:

and that, even if the eulogist should be unable to distinguish music from noise, or noise from Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony.

A vast amount of sensational interest was excited in Paris at the production of Meyerbeer's last opera, *L'Africaine;* but what was the cause of the sensation? Was it the belief that, in this his last work, the genius of the composer having become more matured, the faults of which he had been previously guilty were corrected and that a more really perfect work of musical art had been presented to his many admirers? From the questions circulated at its first representation we may estimate the nature of the interest felt in the work, and the secret of its success:—"How does the Big Ship in the Opera look? How is it managed? How does it behave? Does it really answer to the helm, and float on the mimic waters of the stage as on the sea?" These were the questions whose favourable response secured on the French stage the triumphant success of the opera. And it is doing the English opera-going public no wrong to assert that the merely partial success of the *Africaine* in London was owing to the absence of the great Ship, or rather meted out in proportion to the "*section*" of a ship, with which the machinists of the English stage decorated the *mise-en-scène.* As regards the music itself, it is the work of the same composer as *Robert le Diable, Les Huguenots,* and *Le Prophète;* it has the same characteristics; is equally

full of suggestiveness and ideality; is equally interspersed with fragmentary passages, and similarly deficient in continuity; in a word, its faults and its excellences are precisely on a par with those works of the author which have already been stamped with the verdict of unequivocal success.

The "great ship" on the French stage was the crowning point of success to Meyerbeer's opera; its absence in the representation in this country was the mistake which rendered its production almost tantamount to a failure. Here it has been a victim to conventionalism, for not having propitiated public favour by a sufficient amount of sensational effect. In France it has been a success for its deference to conventional taste. If conventionalism be not before long succeeded by some more judicious form of criticism, it will soon exact, as the status of success for opera, not judgment upon the music, nor a critique upon the composer, but a careful analysis of the machinery and an elaborate definition of costume and scenic effects, as operatic standards. At this rate, conventional criticism on opera will be found some day arraying an Irish jig performed on pandean pipes in accompaniment to the wonderful mechanism of the marionettes, against Mozart's *Don Giovanni* or Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*. The splendid impersonation of Medea by Mdlle. Titiens ensures the success of the opera of that name. The pathos which such a great artiste can display in the character of

Leonora, in Beethoven's *Fidelio*, will always command a satisfactory judgment for that magnificent work. Present the music of either of these operas, deprived of their histrionic adjuncts, and be assured that *Medea* will be considered slow, and *Fidelio* voted unintelligible.

But what a disclosure of the musical taste in England, what a hope for the foundation of an English school of music does that success reveal, which is only based on some mere spectacular, mechanical, histrionic, or sensational effect, tacked on to music, which is rejected or accepted only in proportion to the effect of its adjuncts! At present, such a thorough perversion of musical taste as all these facts exhibit, such a total degradation of the musical art as many points in the profession display, is sufficient evidence that we have no living school of music in England.

But how many causes contribute to this deficiency, beyond and above the lack of taste in the people? Has not the demon of conventionalism been at work in every effort of musical genius to express itself, even so far back as the days of Purcell? Who can deny that, at the time this composer flourished, England displayed a genius equal to that of any country or school? Who that is familiar with the soul-stirring strains of the music in *King Arthur*, and has spared sufficient time from the study of foreign masters to familiarize himself with Purcell's sacred and secular music, could affirm that there was more than one thing wanting to rank him among

the most accomplished musical geniuses of any age? Unfortunately, that one thing wanting was a foreign name; consequently, it became necessary for the conventionalists of the day to array against him the weak and now forgotten effusions of a Cambert and a Grabût.

The Conventionalists of our time declare, not only that we have no English school of music, but that we never had one. Locke, Gibbons, Purcell, Arne, and the old English glee and madrigal writers are undying protests against the truthfulness of this assertion. But English musical art has been crushed in the bud, and has unfortunately sought refuge in the inveterate and almost ape-like proneness to imitation on the part of the English nation for all that is foreign. The result has been, first to deprive us of a school altogether; next to foster to the excess of mere toadyism all that is foreign; and finally to seek popularity by an attempt to imitate the style of successful foreign composers.

Haydn and Mozart are not sensational enough as models; Beethoven is at once too difficult, original and peculiar; and without obviously betraying the plagiarism of imitation, musical thieves cannot successfully poach upon his ideas. Spohr, Mendelssohn, Schubert, and others of the German and French schools, however, have been so mercilessly despoiled, and so basely imitated, that our music shops and concert rooms are flooded with copies and travesties of their mannerisms.

Scarcely a symphony, concerto, or overture written within the last twenty-five years by an English musician is free from this servile spirit of imitation and plagiarism. In opera, also, even amongst composers of unquestionable talent, the same conventionalities are painfully obvious. English composers may plead that it is the conventional folly of the age which has driven them to sacrifice their capacity for producing original music to the imitation of popular foreign composers. But even this plea is hardly sufficient to serve the unblushing imitations which certain English composers have indulged in, when they copy the mannerisms, and sometimes even the prominent failings of Auber. In this respect there are, unfortunately, too many composers in the field upon whom the work of wholesome criticism might be exercised with benefit to the progress of musical art in this country; such, for instance, as the attempt to revive what was called "The Old English School of Music" in opera. That such an attempt should prove a failure, was not only just, but honourable to the spirit of musical genius in England. In order to establish art upon a legitimate foundation, must we needs roll back the ages, and return to first principles? If we desired to improve modern architectural taste, should we attempt to revive the heavy Saxon style, which may be considered as the foundation of British architecture, or copy exclusively the Greek manner, which was the culminating point of excellence in its day? Should we

not rather select the excellencies of all ages, and adapt them to the wants, tastes, and progressive customs of the present day? And, by analogy, the same principle applies to music; hence, an attempt to revive "The Old English School of Music," rather than to improve upon it, is, to say the least, a decided mistake. Many eminent qualities unquestionably exist in the old English ballad opera, a style well adapted to the taste of the time in which it was given; but its mere imitation, rather than its further development, is as open to censure as the servile imitation of foreign composers. But there is yet another and more important cause of failure weighing against our success in ultimating an English school of music; and that is, the ever old, yet ever new, question of demand and supply. The truth is, that unfortunately there is no demand for English music; hence but little attempt at supply. There is no systematic cultivation of taste in music; hence in English society taste is merged in the mere parrot-like conventionalism which praises and condemns just as conventionalism dictates; and the whole of these errors are due to the slavish habit of yielding up individual judgment to conventional opinions.

When English people become as well acquainted with the true purpose, nature, beauty, and elevating tendencies of music, as they are with the names of foreign artists and the mechanical execution of foreign music, they will learn to know that there are no organic or

national disabilities in their countrymen from becoming good composers, musicians, vocalists, and critics. With a better appreciation of the true and beautiful in the art will arise a more wholesome style of criticism upon what is false and meretricious. Musical criticism thus placed on its own basis, instead of being the slavish follower, will become the judicious leader of public opinion. With our national admiration for good music, with all the tendencies of an intelligent and susceptible people in its favour, and an unbounded spirit of liberality in our appreciation of its beauties, I can see no just cause for our lack of an efficient and organic school of music, save the development of that individual taste and judgment in the people, which would foster original talent, and substitute genuine and judicious criticism for the unreasoning dictum of ignorance and conventionalism. In aid of this most desirable result, I earnestly recommend the cultivation of music as a high art, no less than as a source of delightful recreation. The staff of musical critics and journalists of our day (amongst whom we have men of marked ability and correct taste, with abundant opportunities for swaying and guiding public opinion in the right direction) should also consider their individual responsibility in this matter, and, by levelling the shafts of criticism against, rather than pandering to, a false and vitiated taste, endeavour to hasten the long-desired consummation of a resurrection for the English school of art, long buried beneath the idle and vapid

trammels of conventionalism. Then we shall no longer exhibit the degrading anomaly of a musical people without a musical school, and a musical nation without a national idea of music; nor be compelled to go to foreign countries for our music, our artistes, and our opinions, nor mask whatever of native talent we may possess in foreign styles and foreign names, in obedience to the tyrannical sway of popular "conventionalism."

CHAPTER VIII.

MUSIC IN ITS ART-MISSION.

All the fine arts have had, and still have, a special mission. They originate in some of the highest ranges of man's intellectual nature; they are each one an expression of the most elevated conceptions of his mind, and their effect in practice as a totality is civilization; while in their separate and individual influence they improve the morals by refining the imagination, and develop the religious nature by exalting the mind to a contemplation of the works of the Creator. If the mission of Art in the aggregate is thus valuable to the race, the study of the individual branches of art and the special mission of each become subjects of the highest interest and importance.

Whilst I am ready to allow to every art its own peculiar influence upon humanity, and acknowledge all the value for its exercise which its advocates may claim,

I believe I shall be endorsed by the universal voice of humanity, when I affirm that Music is at once the most elevating, universally admired, universally practised, and, above all other arts has been and ever must continue to be, productive of unmixed good to humanity.

It is the first-born of the arts, and its mission is as old as the race itself. It is the most widely spread of the arts, and its exercise is almost synonymous with the presence of man upon the habitable globe. It is the purest of the arts, for its tendencies are ever to exalt, and never to degrade its votaries; in a word, it is *The Divine Art*, and so boundless in its influence for good, that I am compelled to limit my views of its *art*-mission to three propositions only; and that not for lack of material to prove the broadest justifications that can be claimed for music, but because time and space will not permit me to exceed certain limits. I shall treat the subject, therefore, only with reference, first, to the antiquity of the mission of music; next, to the continuity of that mission; and, finally, to its universal and predominating power for good.

Whether we question nature, the constitution of man, tradition, or history, sacred or profane, we must come to the conclusion that Music was the first-born of the fine arts.

Ages before man learned to record his thoughts in symbol, hieroglyphic, sculpture, wood, or metal, he must have heard and appreciated the meaning of the

song of the birds, so varied and full of delicious melodies; the musical tinkling of the fountain; the sublime anthem of the winds; the roar of the tempest in the tree tops; the sighing of the breeze in the bulrush and the reed; the cries of the animals; the pleasant chirp of the insects; the sweet and various inflexions of the human voice, under the different impulses of mind. In a word, Nature is a grand organ on which the hand of the Creator is the master musician, and the mind of the creature his reverent pupil and humble imitator.

An old writer used to argue, that "the first man must have been instructed in all the fine arts by his divine Creator." The recorded history of arts and sciences, no less than a philosophical study of man, assures us that the Creator has implanted in our very being the germ of all talents, and an ever-unfolding capacity for the acquisition of knowledge, as the progressive tendencies of every age imparts it; but the origin of music antedates the expression of human intellect in every other direction, as it is the natural speech of man's emotions in the form of praise, prayer, joy, despair, love, hate, hope, faith, and worship.

Music alone, of all the fine arts, may be said to derive its first impulse from the Divine Teacher, and its hints to form musical instruments from the great laboratory of nature. True philosophy cannot afford to dispense with this inductive mode of reasoning. To those, however, who prefer to rest their faith on authen-

ticated records, the antiquity of music, with its precedence of all other arts, still maintains its ground. It is a significant fact, in connection with this subject, that it is the first of the arts distinctly mentioned in Biblical history. For instance, mention is made of Jubal as "the Father of all such as handle the harp and organ." Now this passage derives great interest from the fact that it refers to a period which antedates the separation of the race into different nations; and even at this most early period (in what we may call the very dawn of human history) it describes, by name, instruments which combine two of the modes of producing musical sounds in exercise to this day, namely, the harp, a stringed instrument, and the organ forming sound by the action of wind through pipes or reeds; and carries back the history of vocal and instrumental music to primeval dates, which, independent of any other witness, would go far to establish the fact that the antiquity of the mission of music is almost coeval with that of man. This is of still more importance when we remember that it is asserted that the Jews obtained their knowledge of the Arts and Sciences from the Egyptians; but as the period referred to, antedates the first recorded intercourse of the Jewish nation with the Egyptians, no such derivation for the art of making or performing upon musical instruments can be proved. We have reason to believe that, not only amongst the Hebrews, but in other nations of antiquity, the art of music precedes

even the ancient Egyptian dynasty; as we have abundance of historical and monumental evidence to prove that the Egyptians derived their theology, and much of their far-famed "wisdom," from the still older kingdom of Hindostan. The renowned Cave Temples of India, including the wonderful remains of Elephanta and Ellora (monuments of art whose vast antiquity is superior to all historical records), are sculptured over with representations of antique worship in which musical instruments are found; but religious worship was performed in India, in forests and caves, long before the construction of temples; and in these, as in the ceremonial rites copied at later periods by the ancient Druids, when it was deemed impious to worship the Creator in any place roofed in from the heavens, music, consisting of chanting and instruments, such as cymbals, drums, harps, and trumpets, were familiarly used in the earliest and most primeval form of worship in the world.

I shall no longer dwell on the evidences of the antiquity of this art, but proceed to consider its continuity and universal and predominating influence on civilization. I find the history of these two elements in music inseparable; for whilst all nations and all ages bear witness to the unbroken continuity of its practice, the results everywhere testify to its sublime, elevating, and civilizing influences. The sister arts have had, and still have, their mission; but their importance varies in different periods of history, and in different lands, whilst

music has been practised and cultivated at all times and in all places—indeed it never *can* fail, wherever the tongue of man can articulate, or the voices of nature can be heard. It is the only art which cannot be converted into a curse as well as a blessing; hence the only one which it is impossible to pervert from high and elevating purposes. The arts of painting and sculpture have just as frequently been used as snares to entrap primitive nations into idolatrous worship and admiration of the false, as to enshrine and honour the true and beautiful. Music may be, and has been, used in superstitious rites and unholy worship; but its tendencies are so inevitably exalting and purifying, that it is the redeeming feature of any scene wherein it is introduced; and if there is in the human heart one latent germ of pity, gentleness, humanity, and piety, music will develop it, even in the darkest and most superstitious rites of an idolatrous worship, to which painting and sculpture have been too often the "panderers." The Israelites, who, after their exodus from Egypt, carried with them much of the knowledge and still more of the superstitious customs of that land, were constantly ensnared into the worship of images and the adoration of painted figures. The proneness of ancient nations to image worship, caused the most stringent laws to be enacted by many of their rulers against the works of the painter and sculptor. The followers of Zoroaster, and the more modern worshippers of Islam, were forbidden to

make or paint resemblances of any object in nature, to counteract the excessive tendency of the race to idolatry. Origen records the stringent laws that existed amongst the Jews on this head, and Turtullian wrote with great zeal against the pernicious effects of these arts. In the early days of Christianity, artists and sculptors were forbidden the rites of baptism until they had foresworn their arts; while those who still continued to practise them contrary to the edicts of the church were excommunicated. Whatever elevating uses the arts of painting and sculpture could therefore have exercised upon the nations of antiquity, were found to be so far exceeded by their abuses, that their practice was frequently utterly suppressed, or else fettered with the chains that bound the Egyptians and Persians, compelling them only to execute such works as a blind and superstitious priesthood dictated.

Music alone, then, of all the fine arts, has been permitted to exercise its holy and beneficent mission to the race, unfettered by priestcraft, and unstained by abuse. To the Hindoo, Egyptian, Persian, Chaldean, Hebrew, Greek, Roman, Saracen, and Christian, it has been the voice of prayer, the tongue of praise, the stimulus to heroism, the goad to victory, the tone of glory, the expression of love, the utterance of joy, and the universal *divine voice*, in which man has breathed forth the noblest expressions of his intellect, and the highest emotions of his soul. Amongst the Hebrews, as we have already

noticed, it was the earliest of all the fine arts they practised, and the most prevalent in all their ceremonials of religious, domestic, and martial life. It constituted their most essential feature in the service of the tabernacle whilst they were wanderers, and that of the temple when they became a nation living in "walled cities." Warriors invariably resorted to it, as a stimulus to incite them to heroic deeds, no less than to kindle the divine fire of their prophets. The movements of their encampments whilst in the wilderness were always signalized by the sound of the trumpet. The first day of the seventh month was to be devoted exclusively "to the blowing of trumpets." We read, in many places in the Old Testament, that the ordinances of fasts and feasts were invariably inaugurated by music. The famous history of the destruction of Jericho by the aid of the trumpets of the besiegers, is a remarkable record of the extraordinary uses which this divinely favoured people made of musical instruments.

It is scarcely necessary to remind the psychologists of our own days of the uses of music over the insane or disturbed mind, as evidenced in the effects which the harp of David produced over the vexed spirit of Saul. Of the influence of music in the mysterious nature of prophecy we have many distinct records, amongst which I might mention that of Saul, who was commanded to go to a certain place, where he should meet "a company of prophets, with a psaltery, a tabret, a pipe,

and a harp; and as Saul joined himself with them, he also prophesied."

This singular and graphic account of the use of music in promoting the efflatus of prophecy is again alluded to in the case of Elisha, who, when called upon by Jehosophat, King of Judah, to prophecy, replied, "Now bring me a minstrel; and it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him."

The vast influence of music in religious rites is far too diffusely recorded in the history of David and Solomon to need comment here. The pictorial and architectural characteristics of Jewish worship were wholly ignored by the founders of the primitive church of Christianity; but the immortal lyrics of "the sweet singer of Israel" were in constant use amongst them; indeed, an ever-present feature of their pure and simple worship was the singing of hymns and spiritual songs; and it is a remarkable fact, that the course of two thousand years has neither affected the continuity of this practice, nor afforded a substitute for the Psalms of David, whose poetic influence and lyrical beauty are never so fully understood as when they are rendered, as their author intended them to be, in the phrases of sweet and holy music. The lack of artistic feeling and the stern asceticism, which banished the use of the fine arts from among the early Christians, have often been imputed to them as a subject of reproach, or as an antago-

nistic element to the progress of civilization; but if these pure and pious votaries of a religion of excessive simplicity shrank from the possible abuses which other arts brought in their train, they did not abstain from the practice of sacred music, which was one of the invariable features of primitive Christian worship, and was therefore obviously deemed by this devoted sect as an element of artistic influence, both necessary to religion and incapable of abuse. During the dark days of persecution, when the Christians were compelled to celebrate the rites of their religion in dim forests, the lurking shelter of caverns, or the still more lugubrious concealment of vaults and catacombs, the sweet low chant of their hymn often proved to be the means of their discovery; and, though they were thus in peril of their lives and not unfrequently betrayed by this very means to the doom of martyrdom, so powerful was this act of consolatory faith, that they were rarely known to forego it, and were ready to endure death, rather than deprive themselves of its sweet and soothing inspiration.

The all-predominating power of music has been exerted with irresistible effect for many centuries in the splendid rituals of Roman Catholicism; and when we remember that not only this religion, but every religion of the known earth, from the worship of Bouddha, Osiris, Thor, and Odin, up to the latest forms of modern Protestantism, have all deemed music an indispensable adjunct of their religious solemnities, we do not claim

too much for this art, when we affirm that its mission has made it alike the handmaid of religion and civilization.

Nor has the mission of music been confined to religion only. Freed from the trammels which Egyptian priestcraft and Oriental despotism imposed on progress, with the growth and rising power of the Greek and Roman dynasties, every description of art and science received the beneficent impetus afforded by the artistic genius of these two great nations.

For at least five centuries before the Christian era, music, painting, poetry and sculpture were cultivated amongst the Greeks in particular, with all the skill and fostering care that the age could afford. The young were carefully trained in executing works of fine art; the land was covered with monuments of beauty and sculptured records of heroism; the popular ear was accustomed to the flowing melodies of song and the rugged grandeur of the chorus, and the imagination became at once refined and instructed by the noble lyrics of the immortal poets of this culminating age of intellectual progress.

In history, Greece may truly be assigned the proud place of the encyclopædia of art, and the mother of that imperishable influence upon the intellect which has continued its exercise from her time down to the present. But still a studious consideration of the mission of the fine arts as civilizers must award the palm to music.

It is an accepted fact in history, that no writers, poetic or historic, or even statesmen, exercised a more potent influence over the popular minds of the Greeks, than the famous fathers of the lyric drama—Thespis, Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. The writings of these great masters of dramatic song were in their generation, and long after, the means of elevating the stage to a position of legislator for the public morals, and inculcator of noble sentiments and heroic virtues, in combination with the most beautiful forms. None of the fables of antiquity is more suggestive of Grecian susceptibility of the power of music than the mythical history of Orpheus, the Greek impersonation of the Spirit of Music. In this mythological story, the performance of Orpheus on the lyre is said to have enchanted wild beasts; moved rocks and stones; allured the Argonauts from the pleasures of Lemnos; lulled the Colchian dragon, who guarded the golden fleece, to sleep; conquered a passage to Hades; subdued the powers of darkness, and triumphed over death, by carrying his lost wife, Eurydice, back again to earth. What teaching than this can be more rife with evidence concerning the almost unlimited power which the Greeks attributed to the charms of music? The intense devotion of Pythagoras and Plato to the divine art need hardly be referred to here; and, though the development of what we should now esteem to be the highest possibilities of music was greatly retarded by the cramping methods of Euclid, and its stern reduction

to the rules of demonstration, still the entire history of the nation testifies to its enthusiastic appreciation of the art. Not only did the Greeks introduce it as an indispensable element in their temple services, public games, festivals, triumphs and dramatic representations, but they deemed it a necessary feature in the study of philosophy—the perfect accomplishment of the scholar and the education of youth. Thus, in the secular, no less than the religious, history of mankind, music antedates all the other fine arts in its origin, and surpasses them all in its unbroken continuity; for whilst the veto of priests and legislators frequently restrained the exercise of the sister arts, and even for centuries threw its pall of superstition and ignorance over their usefulness, such powers were either futile, or were never exerted against the purifying and inevitable expression of human emotions in the form of music.

My limits will not permit me to notice in detail the influence of music as one of the great civilizers of the middle ages; for the present, therefore, I shall only allude to the various eras in which its art-mission was still continuous and triumphant. In the days of chivalry, when locomotives, telegraphs and steam engines were not even hinted at in the wildest flights of prophetic dreamers, though their want was just as essential as at the present day, many of the most valuable records of history were made and handed down to posterity through the medium of the bards; while the wandering trouba-

dour, or minstrel, was not merely the agent of administering to the amusements of the people, but was also the journalist of the day and the news-carrier. He was the friend of the village gossip, the oracle of the town, the ever-welcome guest in court and camp, the messenger, herald, itinerant printing press, and travelling post-office. As a mere poet, or historian, his mission would have been simply official; but, as combining the duties of many offices with the charms of music, the effects which these singular musical itinerants produced on civilization can only be estimated by a more detailed account of them than the limits of this chapter will permit. The days of the Plantagenets, Tudors, and Stuarts, were also too full of the history of the art-mission of music to be slightly dealt with; it must suffice for the present that I call attention to the special effect which music, as a general civilizer, has been able to produce in our own time, by the introduction of the harpsichord, or spinet, and modern pianoforte.

One of the chief charms of vocal music, and the claim of superiority which is sometimes alleged for it, is founded upon the simplicity and universality of its production. Vocal music is almost synonymous with speech; and as the unreasoning mind is always best satisfied with that which is most familiar, so it has become a habit to assign to vocal music a superiority which it by no means possesses over instrumental. The vast range of powers which harmony adds to mere melody is too undeniably

proved to need assertion here. Melody is *one* of the five senses only. Harmony is *the combination of them all*, with reason presiding over their exercise. Vocal music is the expression of one idea; instrumental, the language of the whole creation, and its range, compass, powers of expression, and almost unlimited variety of tones, render it justly estimated as nature's truest and grandest interpreter. We may hail with delight, then, the invention of an instrument, which, like the pianoforte, combines so many elements of power for the expression of musical ideas. Its vast compass, capacity for harmonious combinations, as well as the facility with which its execution may be acquired, render its invention a positive era in the history of music, and one of the chief promoters of the general taste for, and accomplishment in, the art at the present day. Had not Handel been able to express his massive musical ideas first on his famous harpsichord, or had Beethoven and Mendelssohn lived before the days of pianofortes, their powers as composers might have been the same; but the expression of those powers, and the universal popularity which pianoforte practice has given to their works, and those of other great masters, would inevitably have been wanting.

The harpsichord (which may be regarded as the parent of the pianoforte) was in use even in the sixteenth century; but the instrument was rare, and exceedingly costly; in fact, from the want of our modern machinery to aid in its construction, and the

habit which prevailed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of limiting instruction in music to the higher and wealthier classes, the use of the harpsichord, or spinet, was rare, and the instrument too expensive to be attainable by the masses. Besides this, the custom of ornamenting the cases with the most elaborate carvings and gildings, and even, in some instances, finished paintings, reduced the spinet much more to the category of a costly piece of ornamental furniture than the interpreter of the noblest and most sublime art of civilization. Happily for this age, it has determined to leave our pianoforte cases to the carpenter and polisher, and requires that the charms of the instrument should be outwrought from the mind of the performer, and the beautiful paintings be rendered by his own skilful fingers. So long as the pianoforte player carries out this idea faithfully, and renders sublime thoughts and varied emotions in melody (which is sound-painting), and harmony (which is tone-sculpture), this instrument becomes one of the most useful and capable agents in the world for the universal diffusion of the elevating influence of music; but when our pianoforte players use their instruments for the mere display of ornamental skill and gymnastic facility, there is but little difference between the painted and gilded cases of ancient spinets, and the painted and gilded trash music of modern pianofortes. As agents of mere vain display, both are desecrations of the noble art of music; and the young

lady, who realizes no higher aim in pianoforte playing than to torture her keys into the fanciful trickling of "tears, and showers, and pearls, and fountains," and meaningless gymnastics generally, has not advanced one step in music beyond the belle of the eighteenth century, whose luxurious boudoir was incomplete if it did not boast of a well-carved and gilded spinet, whose beauty would have been imperilled by the attempt to open it.

Let it not be supposed that I would deny to the functions of music its capacity for administering to innocent amusement, as well as its more serious and earnest effect in its art-mission. On the contrary, I would urge upon all educators of youth the cultivation of music as one of the most delightful as well as elevating sources of recreation and domestic enjoyment. I would neither exclude the song, dance, nor merry tune, from voice or instrument, because I think the music of the great masters of a more elevating character; but I would urge upon all persons to whom the great responsibility of shaping the mind of youth is entrusted, that music, in its art-mission, is one of the greatest agents of civilization *only* when it is exercised for the improvement of the taste, the refinement of the intellect, the chastening of the passions, and the promotion of unworldly thoughts; and that the pianoforte, as the most varied and extensive in power, and the most complete and popular of all instruments, fails utterly to realize these great purposes if it be studied merely as a vehicle for display, practised

as a fashionable accomplishment alone, and painfully learned for the mere achievement of a mechanical skill, that only astonishes and tortures the ear.

The influence of music as an educator is now too generally admitted to need further argument. The use of the pianoforte as one of the most popular agents for disseminating that influence is also a truism that cannot be disputed: it only remains, then, for teachers of the young to appreciate *in themselves* the great value of music "in its art-mission," and its utter worthlessness as a mere vehicle for fashionable display. When music means ideas, sensations, passions, feelings and thoughts, it is the solace of grief, the soother of passion, the stimulator to good, the rebuker of evil. When it is simply a string of notes performed with no other idea than that of the attainment of extraordinary mechanical skill, it is a desecration of the art itself, and its degradation into a painted harpsichord only fashioned for attraction and kept for show. That music in its "art-mission" will not much longer, in this age, be sacrificed at the shrine of mere fashionable display, I have the most confident hopes; and it is on the good sense and intellectual progress of the rising generation that I base my faith for the ultimate recognition of its highest aims as a promoter of what is true and noble in art.

The career of other arts has been erratic in time, and partial in nations. Music has been unchanging, continuous and universal in all lands. The painter is

dependant on the mechanic for his colours and implements, whilst the sculptor owes much of his success to the materials of the quarry and the tools with which he is supplied; but the Creator has fashioned an instrument in the very person of the creature, which serves him alike in all circumstances, ages and climes. The superior excellence of the mission of music, also, is proved by the fact that it has ever accompanied humanity in its weal and woe, given fullest expression to its joys and sorrows, ministered in all the sacred offices of religion, incited the patriot to his noblest acts of heroism, soothed the savage, restored mental health to the mind of the insane, promoted the joys of social life, rewarded the weariness of labour, beguiled the hours of pain, toil and sorrow, ever spoken with the tongue of angels, and never in the dissonant voice of evil. I conclude my observations by observing that I have shown, both in its antiquity, unbroken continuity and all predominating influence, that the history of music is the religious and intellectual history of man.

Music has sustained its dominating influence through the patriarchal ages, hallowing the edicts of the lawgiver, stimulating the fire of the prophet, sanctifying the splendours of royalty, and celebrating the rites of priesthood. It has breathed its sacred strains of worship through the lips of saints, and chanted grand old apostolic hymns through the voices of martyrs. It has sung its lyrics of faith through dying lips and inspired tongues.

It has celebrated the triumphs of invincible Roman legions, and immortalized the praises of the Olympian victors. It has given expression to the profoundest philosophies of Athenian sages, and led on the warriors of every country and age to the most invincible deeds of heroism. It has sounded out the solemn anthems of Catholic power, and breathed its simple hymns of praise from the followers of Wickliffe and Huss. It has chanted the clarion peal of the Reformation through the lips of stout-hearted Martin Luther, and cheered on his followers through succeeding periods of strife and martyrdom. It has poured forth the song of praise at the fiery stake, and expressed the trembling accents of faith at the agonizing rack; and thus, with its eternal hosannas of prayer and praise, truth, good and beauty, music has been the herald of progress from the dawning hour of creation up to the present day. It has ever been the handmaid of religion, one of the chief levers in the march of civilization, and the grand epic of the ages. Its history has been that of the good, the true and the beautiful in humanity, and its true "art-mission" is to proclaim the mighty Oratorio of all Creation.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MUSIC AND INFLUENCE OF THE ANCIENT SCALDS AND BARDS.

THE bards, troubadours and minstrels were persons who, in their age and time, exerted an influence upon civilization of a very marked and peculiar character; and their history forms an important epoch in that of music. It seems evident that there was a regular succession in the order of these ancient musicians; but it is now very little understood, and an office and influence are often assigned to one class which properly belong only to another.

I propose alluding to them in the succession which history assigns them: viz. as the Bards, or the earliest musicians of Western Europe; the Scalds, who held the same office in Northern Europe; the Minstrels, who succeeded them; and the Jongleurs and Troubadours,

who, though coming under the generic title of minstrels, were distinct from each other.

The office of the bard was one of such extreme antiquity, that, whilst we have many allusions to it in history, we are not furnished with any reliable records concerning its actual origin, except that the bards existed, and their office was known, in the primitive days of Gallic and Celtic life. Lucan, Tacitus, and Strabo, all make mention of bards, as singers who used to recite poems and sing hymns amongst the Gauls and Germans. They were also known as an order amongst the Druids; their songs were supposed to incite the fury of the warriors on going to battle, and their powers of prophecy were held in high esteem.

Corresponding in all respects to the office of the bard and scald of Western and Northern Europe, were the songsters mentioned by Donado in his Turkish History, who are said to have chaunted lyrics set to twenty-four regular tunes, or musical pieces, each one of which was appropriated to some special idea; as joy, sorrow, love, or mourning, as circumstances demanded. It seems that these twenty-four tunes constituted the entire repertoire of ancient Turkish music, and were handed down from one generation to another, whilst the ability of the poet was taxed to adapt suitable verses to them. Whether these ancient songsters accompanied themselves on any kind of instrument, or what was the exact character of their music, we have now no authentic

records to show. Whilst we have abundant evidence concerning the nature of the Greek lyric drama, and of the instruments used by oriental nations—some of which were common alike amongst the Jews and Saracens—we have no instruments traditionally associated with the bardic music earlier than the close of the fifth century, save the harp.

It is related that whilst Colgrin, son of that Ella who was elected king, or leader, of the Saxons in the room of Hengist, was shut up in York, and closely besieged by Arthur and the Britons, Baldolph, brother of Colgrin, wanted to gain access to him, and to apprize him of a reinforcement which was coming from Germany. He had no other way to accomplish his design but of assuming the character of a bard. He therefore shaved his head and beard, and, dressing himself in the habit of that profession, took his harp in his hand, and in this disguise walked up and down the trenches without suspicion, playing all the while upon his instrument as a harper. By little and little he advanced nearer to the walls of the city, and, making himself known to the sentinels, he was finally, during the obscurity of night, drawn up by a rope. Rapin considers this incident to have happened in the year 495.

There is a harp still preserved in Trinity College, Dublin, said to have belonged to Brian, King of Ireland, who fell in battle against the Danes, in 1014. Such evidence affords us proof that the harp was used in

accompaniment to bardic songs in the periods alluded to.

As to the nature of the vocal music chanted by the ancient bards, we are in considerable ignorance; but we have historical evidence to show that as poets and historians their literature was abundant, and their influence widely spread and remarkably powerful. We are in possession of some very early Scandinavian tunes; but they are without date, and do not seem to be identical with the Scaldic era. In all probability, early musical art consisted either of monotonous recitative of a chant-like character, or else of a set of stereotyped tunes common to many generations, which, as amongst the Moors and Turks, were adapted to any or every poem that would fit them. Even as late as the year 1586, Webb, in his Discourse on English Poetry, alludes to the practice of setting verses to all manner of tunes, as the occupation of the songsters of his day. We may well conclude, then, that the musicians of still older periods availed themselves of a similar practice. The Kings of Ireland and Wales had no Beethoven amongst them, to write upwards of 120 compositions in every style, and all masterpieces in their way. One composition alone selected from Handel's glorious repertory of hundreds would doubtless suffice to have set up the whole order of Celtic bards; whilst a single year of Mendelssohn's indefatigable life would have supplied all the bards or northern scalds with music for ages.

Amongst the Scalds of Northern Europe, the arts of poetry and music were attributed to the gods of Scandinavia, Thor and Odin. Hence the Scalds were deemed in some respects sacred, and their order almost corresponded to that of a priesthood. The very name of Scalds, signifying "smoothers or polishers of language," shows that they were held in esteem chiefly for their oratorical powers; and, when it is remembered that the ancient Norsemen were a rude people, with scarcely any vestige of literature, arts, or sciences, it may readily be understood how valuable must have been the services of these lyrical orators, who not only stimulated the fierce tribes of the north on to the inevitable battle field, and thus served the best interests of nations whose occupation was war, but also ministered to the pride and ambition of those who, beside the songs of the Scalds, had no other means of handing their names down to posterity, or of transmitting the memory of their daring deeds to future ages.

Here then we have all the sources of influence in operation which are likely to affect human nature, and a barbarous people in particular. When in our own age, so rife with literature and so abundantly supplied with characteristic music for every conceivable notion or event, from the oratorios of the great masters to the comic songs descriptive of the follies of the day, need we marvel that an office which stimulated the warrior to deeds of glory,

mourned his death and celebrated his prowess; soothed the lover and gave vent to the fire of jealousy; rebuked vice and exalted virtue; an office which included alike the historian, poet, counsellor and censor of the time, should have found favour with all classes, and was deemed the most essential and honourable position next to that of the priest and sovereign in the whole nation?

From the learned Percy, Beauford's Origin and Learning of the Irish Bards, and numerous valuable treatises on the Welsh Bards and Ancient Druids, we have abundance of testimony concerning the order among the early inhabitants of Britain.

Many writers claim for the Irish Bards a precedence in antiquity, as well as in attainment, over the Welsh and British. Sir William Temple says that the Irish bardic music partook strongly of the Scandinavian character, and deems it probable that the Irish derived their music and style from the ancient Scald; he also adds that, "in the eleventh century, Griffith, King of Wales, fetched from Ireland many Irish Bards, for the reformation and improvement of the Welsh."

In an old History of Cambria, written by one Powell, and published in 1584, it is asserted that the same Griffith "brought with him from Ireland cunning musicians into Wales, who devised all the instrumental music used there, as appeareth as well by the books written of the same, but also by the names of the tunes

and measures used among them to this day." These notices are especially interesting, as they furnish us with a satisfactory impression, first, of the Scaldic or Scandinavian origin of Irish bardic music; next, of the influence of the Irish Bards on the Welsh; and, lastly, of the existence both of the poems and music of the Welsh Bards at the time of the author's writing, viz. 1584.

In a memoir of the Irish Bards published by Walker in 1786, it is said that the Bards were of three classes: the poets, who chanted religious songs and animated the troops for battle; the Brehons, or legislative Bards, who promulgated the edicts of justice, reciting laws in a kind of monotonous chant, seated in state in the open air; and a third order, who were genealogists and historians. Besides these, there were several of an inferior order who were called after the various instruments they played. They were all of hereditary rank, were permitted to wear robes of the same colour as royalty, maintained great retinues, and were endowed with ample estates and large revenues. The power and splendour of these remarkable people are in strange contrast to a very obscure and now rapidly disappearing class of persons, who, up to the beginning of the present century, were known in Ireland as "tale-tellers." They were seen at fairs, and rustic gatherings, and sometimes were employed to beguile a circle of fashionable idlers in a

long winter's evening, by their improvised recitations of fairy tales, legends of olden times, or records of bygone power and glory. These modern and degenerate descendants of the honoured Scalds are now poor vagrants, and their very existence is only known to the curious traveller. Their services are only rewarded by the pence of the poor peasantry; and, indeed, they are but the last shadow of a bygone splendour, whose twilight hour is fast deepening into the night of oblivion.

Of the Welsh and British Bards, or gleemen, there are many interesting accounts. We find them named amongst the early inhabitants of Britain and Wales, preserving so many customs and characteristics of the Norsemen, that they have sometimes, though erroneously, been called minstrels, a title that was derived from the Normans, and was not in use till after the Norman conquest.

In Pennant's Tour of Wales, he cites the laws of "Hoel Dha," a bardic code drawn up in about the year 940. These laws show that the same honourable position was accorded to the bards at this period as that assigned to the Irish Bards; such as the tenure of land, and the highest place at public ceremonies. With the final subjugation of Britain by the Normans, the distinct characteristics of the bard became merged into the equally admired but less honored minstrel.

For a long time bard and minstrel practised their

art contemporaneously, and are now often mistaken for each other. With the gradual loss of hereditary dignity, the absence of "caste," but, above all, the inevitable progress of learning, the necessity for the office of the bard began to decline. The profession of minstrel was adopted as a favourite amusement, and sometimes even used for political purposes by men of all grades and conditions, including kings and princes. The sacred office of bard, sternly limited to a few privileged families, dwindled away into the link of association between the traditionary past and the stirring active life of a new era. The universal minstrel borrowed the bardic art, and inherited his mantle of music and poetry; but, adapting himself to the intellectual progress of a new age, he became blended with the jongleur and troubadour, but still continued to be the favourite necessity, and admired appanage of home and tournament, court and camp; in fact, the minstrel in the early days of chivalry was almost ubiquitous. His song now enlivened the roystering cheer of the Knights of the round table, and now sped the way for the crusader to the burning plains of Palestine; or his peaceful garb now concealed the mailed coat of the warrior and the glittering panoply of the prince. In a word, the art of the minstrel became world-wide, while that of the bard retired into the twilight of a by-gone age, and gradually receded beneath the advancing tides of a civilization, which gathers up

the beautiful, but commits the useless and effete to the monumental ages of the past, where the memory of its departed greatness alone is preserved.

When viewed through the hazy but fascinating light of antiquity, the fancy invariably weaves around the memory of the bards all the attributes of power and influence which they at one time really enjoyed. Their very name suggests a world of romance and poetical association, and we may now lament that these lyrical legislators live only in the realm of tradition, or appear only with the silver locks of fine horse-hair furnished by stage costumiers and harps of tinselled pasteboards provided by the stage property-man. But, if now the sacred order of Druids only steps on the scene for the accommodation of an operatic Norma, or the Scotch bard only strings his harp at the bidding of an Italian Opera Douglas, if the stage caricatures, called in play-bills "bards," are the only relics left of the once mighty order of ancient lyrists, let us quit the realm of romance and confess that we are gainers by the change. For the one man whose music was simply made the vehicle of paying fulsome adulation to a powerful patron, and whose censure was the vituperation of one petty potentate against another, we have now composers and musicians, poets, historians, essayists, critics, censors and eulogists of all varieties of intellect and capabilities.

The bards have done their work, and laid the foundations of the music and literature of succeeding ages. Whilst we acknowledge the value of that work, and dismiss them to the realm of tradition with a sigh "for the beauty departed," let us not overlook the fact that they have disappeared to make way for the developments of the lofty musical art, poetic lore, and historical knowledge which we enjoy at the present day.

CHAPTER X.

MINSTRELS AND TROUBADOURS.

MINSTRELS and Troubadours were a class of musicians who may be regarded as the successors of the ancient Scalds and Bards. The chief point of difference that distinguished Bards from Minstrels consisted in the fact that the order of Bards was hereditary, while that of the Minstrels was patent to all classes, who might derive their right of office from their peculiar qualifications. The term Minstrel, as I have before stated, is derived from the Norman, and signifies not only the harper who played and sang, but also the Poet who wrote the song, and the "Mime," or Dancer, who occasionally performed the action of the poem in pantomime.

The universality of the "Minstrel" was not recognized until the Norman dynasty, in the eleventh century, when the term began to be of general application; but the office itself was known long before the conquest of Britain by the Normans, and recognized in the person of the so-called "Gleeman."

The "Gleeman" was not, strictly speaking, the "Bard," but a person who, like the Norman Minstrel, filled his office by virtue of his qualification as a poet or musician. It is difficult, in these days of universal knowledge, to estimate properly the highly important services which these "Gleemen" rendered to the cause of mediæval civilization.

One of the best evidences of the status of the "Gleeman," and the use of which he became to posterity, no less than to his age, is to be found in Kemble's work, entitled *Beowulf* (pronounced Beetwolf), which contains a poem called "The Gleeman's Song," said to be the oldest and finest specimen of Anglo-Saxon literature extant. This poem is found in the works of Bishop Leofric, who wrote in the eleventh century; but it carries back the existence of the Gleemen even to the fourth and fifth centuries, and makes mention of the important uses which they fulfilled in singing the Psalms of David, teaching the legends of Christianity, and recording history in poetry and song. What the exact nature of the music was that these Gleemen chanted, we cannot now pretend to determine. That it was a monotonous kind of recitation, accompanied by the harp, the poems of the time prove; but that they were utterly unsuited to the rhythmical music with which we are now familiar, we may judge, by selecting a few lines from the above-named Gleeman's Song, which dates in the year 417, and runs in a singularly unmusical and

unrhythmical strain. Speaking of himself the gleeman says:

> "So I fared, thro' many lands; a stranger
> Thro' the wide earth: of good and evil
> There I tasted: from family parted,
> From kinsmen far, widely I did my suit—
> Therefore may I sing and story tell,
> Relate 'fore the crowd in mead hall,
> How me the high born with largess blest."

He then goes on to describe his wanderings amongst the Romans, Goths, and Huns—describes the favourable reception he met with from the Court of Rome, and afterwards his success in winning largess from the famous Alaric and Attila.

Kemble contends that these songs of the Gleemen are the only links which connect the Latin and middle-age chroniclers, and that without them we have no authentic sources of information concerning the Gothic, Sclavish, and Finnish races. Hence the Gleemen occupy much the same position in regard to their being chroniclers of a history which would otherwise have perished, that Tacitus assigns to the ancient Bards and Scalds.

Amongst the Saxons, the Gleemen occupied a place second in dignity to the hereditary order of Bards, but still one of the utmost importance and value to posterity. The Gleemen, being, like the Norman Minstrels, unfettered by hereditary laws of caste and family, numbered amongst their ranks nobles and burghers, princes and

peasants. Even the famous Saxon hero, King Alfred, disdained not the accomplishment of the Gleeman's art; was highly proficient in verse-making; and, upon fair traditional authority, is said to have gained admission to the camp of his enemy in the disguise of a harper, and, by his fascinating skill with his voice and instrument, to have beguiled his foes into betraying to him their force and plans of operation. The venerable Bede, whose works are amongst the earliest and most valued of Anglo-Saxon literature, gives some singular relations of a famous Saxon Gleeman, called Cædmon. This Cædmon seems to have been attached to the convent of the celebrated Abbess Hilda. "One day at supper," says the chronicle, "as the harp was passing from hand to hand, and it came to his turn to amuse the company, overcome by his diffidence, he stole away from the table, hid himself in the '*Neat house*,' and there fell asleep. He then dreamt that a noble and reverend figure came to him, harp in hand, and encouraged him to sing; under the spell of the Bard of the dream, Cædmon composed a song, which was the next day repeated to the Abbess and an admiring company, who voted unanimously that he had received the gift of song from above." Henceforth Cædmon (who became a monk) was regarded as an inspired musician, and his body was prized by the monks of Whitby as one of their most precious relics.

The songs of Cædmon, which were chiefly of a devotional character, were esteemed by the learned Bede as written

by the direct inspiration of Heaven, and other historians of the period regard them as models of form and excellence. For six centuries after his death they constituted the highest specimens of the standard literature of the age, and up to the last century were esteemed among the most valuable relics of the days of the Anglo-Saxons. It is, of course, to be regretted that we have no records of the music of these famous Gleemen of old, and that musical notation and the use of rhythmical measure had not progressed in those days in the same degree as alphabetical writing.

I will now direct attention to the period when the genuine Norman Minstrel, the successor alike of Scald, Bard, and Gleeman, appeared on the scene.

The traces of Norman minstrelsy are everywhere abundant in history. As with the Bards, great honours were paid them, and their services were deemed indispensable in court, camp, journey, feast, mourning, and merry-making. They were retained as accessories to the retinues of the nobles; filled the baronial hall with the soul-stirring strains of the war-song; chanted the love-ditty in every fair lady's bower; mitigated the toil and weary life of the serving man; accompanied the warrior to battle, and chanted his praises in death; flattered the pride of the monarch and the ambition of the statesman; beguiled the loneliness of the camp fires with songs of the wild and wonderful, with legends of giants and demons, captive ladies and chivalrous knights; in a

word, they formed for a long period the joy and instruction, and became the attached followers and itinerant news-carriers, of the age. Shortly after the introduction of Christianity into Britain, the establishment of monasteries, with the consequent leisure afforded to the men of education who inhabited these secluded dwellings, gave a strong impetus to the progress of literature and poetry; and it is asserted by all reliable historians of the period that the majority of the writings of the first two centuries after the Norman conquest emanated from the monks, and that the rhymes set by the Minstrels to music proceeded from the same source. Thus the Poet and the Minstrel became distinct persons, the Poets being generally the men of talent and leisure, who inhabited the monasteries, and the Minstrels wandering musicians, who set these writings to music, and sometimes accompanied their performances with mimicry and action, which procured for them the title of "Mimics" and "Jocculatories."

William of Malmesbury makes particular mention of the warrior Minstrel who rode before the Conqueror at the battle of Hastings, brandishing his sword, and using extravagant actions of defiance, whilst singing the "Song of Roland." Huntingdon, an historian of the period, also speaks of the "Hero Minstrels" of the Norman armies who by voice and deeds incited the warriors to brave actions. Besides those who were devoted to the art of minstrelsy as a profession, it is evident that

knights, warriors and princes often indulged their tastes with the exercise of the art; and hence arose the chivalric order of the Troubadours, who, though most commonly identified with the Minstrels of the south of Spain, France, and eastern Italy, eventually spread over the entire of Europe.

The progress of literature and the increase of knowledge, which the general diffusion of the Christian religion tended greatly to promote in Europe, diminished the usefulness of the Minstrels as poets and historians—offices that came gradually to be absorbed by more competent persons—but in nowise abated their influence as musicians, especially during the wars of the Crusades and the long succession of intestine conflicts that agitated Europe during the whole of the middle ages. Minstrel Knights still sung the praises of their lady loves beneath the standards dedicated to their honour; and young Squires, from the famous Blondel of Cœur de Lion to the far-famed "Minstrel Boy," still threw the mantle of the beautiful, in the shape of music and poetry, around the grim demon of war and the destructive spirit of the tournay.

It is scarcely necessary to state that an age so famous as that of Minstrelsy, and a subject so rife with interest as that of music in the age of chivalry, would afford scope for volumes rather than chapters of a short review. I shall, therefore, speak simply of the instruments in use at the time of early Minstrelsy, and pass

on to notice the Troubadours. Besides the harp, so famous amongst the Bards, and highly popular amongst the more modern Minstrels, there were others better adapted, as it would seem, to their itinerant modes of performance; these were the lute, a kind of small and portable instrument, somewhat similar to the Spanish guitar; the fiole, a sort of viol, from which is derived the fiddle; the psaltery, an instrument strung with wires; and pipes of different descriptions.

To St. Dunstan, famous in legendry lore as the illustrious warrior who fought the devil with a pair of tongs, is ascribed the introduction of the organ into the solemnities of the church, and many improvements in that instrument.

In every grade of society music flourished in the middle ages throughout Europe; and, though the dignity and importance of the Scalds and Bards passed away with the universal diffusion of knowledge, and the absorption of the literature of the age by monks, churchmen and learned laymen, the love of music and its all-predominating influence over the warlike nations of the middle ages cannot be prized too greatly. Even now, the romantic appreciation in which the Minstrel and his delightful art were held by the chivalry and beauty of the mediæval ages forms a favourite theme for poet and musician in our own time; and many of the sweetest and most popular lyrics of the last century have been tuned to the memory of those fascinating

itinerants for whom beauty wove her fairest garlands, royalty bestowed its richest rewards, and chivalry its most grateful meed of praise.

The Troubadours, although generally classed amongst the Minstrels of the middle ages, were, strictly speaking, poets rather than musicians. They often included in their ranks men of the highest station, and scholars of the highest attainments. When men of this position adopted the garb and office of Troubadours, they generally wrote their own verses, and adapted them to music. Others, however, as knights and gentlemen of leisure, often amused themselves in composing poems which they entrusted to a class of wandering musicians, called Jongleurs, to set to music for them.

As a society, distinct from the wandering Minstrels of northern Europe, the Troubadours undoubtedly originated in the south of France. Their first distinguished recognition in history is about the eleventh or twelfth century, when they were known as the writers of a kind of poetry which became highly popular amongst the nations of southern Europe, namely, lyrical and amatory verses. The sweet Languedoc and Provençal dialects seemed admirably adapted to express the amatory strains of the Troubadours; and, as this style of poetry was in keeping with the chivalric taste of the day, and the inflated gallantry of the dissolute age and countries in which they lived, the Troubadour's poetry, though an apt representation of the manners of the

time, does not possess the value and dignity of the minstrelsy and poesy of more northern lands. In 1324, the citizens of Toulouse founded a sort of Academy, which they dedicated to "the gay Sciences," placing seven Troubadours of Toulouse at its head.

Attempts were made by this Academy to reform the dissolute tone of the poetry of the Troubadours generally, although it still preserved a somewhat inflated style, and contributed largely towards fanning into flame the spirit of intrigue that then prevailed in Spain and Italy.

Monsieur Raynouard, in his exhaustive researches into ancient chivalry and the history of the Troubadours, asserts that, besides their sworn devotion to the fair and the abundance of the love ditties they composed, they wrote and set to music many volumes of lyrics on war, politics, and history. Moreover, he gives them the credit of dabbling in astronomy, medicine, scriptural and mythical history, magic, divination, sorcery, and divers other treasures of knowledge, most of which, like the Troubadours themselves, may be counted as amongst the vestiges of the lost arts. Many of the heroes of these Troubadour bands were, according to Raynuoard, men of the highest station. Amongst them was William, the ninth Duke of Aquitaine, the oldest Troubadour on record. Old William of Malmsbury describes this doughty knight by his second title of Count of Poictiers, as a Troubadour, or "Minstrel knight, who, after his

return from the Crusades, used his great gifts for poetry and song in travelling about the world to beguile unwary damsels and captivate fair ladies' hearts." Other noble and distinguished chevaliers swelled the ranks of the Troubadours, and, by their high station, bravery in arms, success in intrigue, no less than their position as men of means and leisure, no doubt contributed not a little to extend the fame of their order, and gave it in legendary interest even a superior claim to that of the Minstrel. Indeed the facts of history sufficiently attest the superior worth and usefulness of the English Minstrel to that of the idle and luxurious Provençal Troubadour.

The friend of the humble peasant, the joy of the village green and the May-day merry-making, the admiration of the courtier, the envy of the cavalier, the herald of fame, the attached follower of the warrior, the consolation of grief, the inspiration of valour, and the stimulus to virtuous actions and noble deeds, the Minstrel, whether as musician or poet, was one of the avant couriers of middle-age civilization, as well as the necessity and embellishment of his time. If the aim of the Troubadour were less exalted, his life less valuable to society, and more selfishly devoted to personal gratification, it still combined with that of the Minstrel to extend the influence and civilizing effects of music in his age, as well as that of succeeding generations.

With the inauguration of the brilliant Elizabethan

era, and the advent of those constellations of genius in literature, wit, talent and musical attainment, which shone in the court of this great queen, the complete degradation of the order of itinerant minstrelsy was achieved. Minstrel and Troubadour had long ceased to maintain either the usefulness or dignity of their office. The demand for their services gradually ceased, and the supply which they furnished at last merged into little more than a form of vagrancy, which was sufficiently obnoxious to become the subject of parliamentary reform. Classed with "jugglers, dancers, tinkers, and pedlars," they were extinguished by law, or, in the words of a satirical poem of the day, which records their fate and the statute which degraded them,—

> "Beggars they are with one consent,
> And rogues by act of parliament."

The song of the Minstrel now is hushed, and the lay of the Troubadour is silent. The mystic Scald chants no more his songs of Vallhalla, and the inspired Bard will never again sweep the harp of prophecy, or sing to the echoing winds the praises of the heroes of Ossian. But though the personages are gone, the form of the art broken, and its very memory little more than a dim tradition, or a shadowy reflection of the glory of a departed age, the spirit of poetry and music, like the fabled Phœnix of antiquity, has arisen from the ashes of the Minstrelsy of the past. A brighter era for poet

and musician than ever dawned on the age of chivalry, or stimulated the deadly aim of the warrior, is that wherein both arts find their legitimate sway over the imagination of the cultivated, and exert their beneficent influence in promoting the highest civilization of our own age.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUDING REMARKS ON "MINSTRELS."

In the two preceding chapters I have pointed to the Scalds and Bards and their successors, the "Gleemen," Minstrels and Troubadours, as a class of persons whose services as historians can never be too highly venerated, and whose performances as poets and musicians produced throughout Europe the most permanent and elevating effects upon civilization. Their influence, also, up to a certain date, whether in court or camp, at home or abroad, was undoubtedly higher than that of any other class of persons in the community.

The fact that their office was degraded and their services rejected as an order, in the reign of Elizabeth, only proves that, until literature and music could take rank as independent professions and dispense with the use of itinerant minstrelsy, the very constitution of society demanded its existence and practice, and was deemed essential to the well-being of the age.

The itinerant poet, however, could not enter the

lists with a Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Spencer, Raleigh, or Sydney; nor could the wandering minstrel compete with a Morley, Wilbye, Orlando Gibbons, Dowland, and the host of noble madrigal writers, who only preceded by a few years the still more elevating band of musicians headed by Locke and Purcell. The suppression of the minstrels and their degradation to the rank of "Vagrants" by act of Parliament, have sometimes been charged upon the Elizabethan age as a reproach; but most unjustly so, as far as the best interests of society and the progress of the art were concerned.

The wonderful developments of genius in the departments of literature and poetry, which mark this age, prove conclusively that the itinerant minstrel had been superseded by musicians and poets of a far higher order, while the love for, and just appreciation of, all that was beautiful in his art remained.

Flemings, Spaniards, and Italians were flooding the continent of Europe with music of a form and style far superior to that of any previous age; and the patronage bestowed upon the well-trained and (at this period) renowned musicians of England, together with the rapid strides which musical form began now to take in the direction of opera, are sufficient evidence that the requirements of the age could no longer be met by the acquirements of the minstrels. The taste of the day had outgrown the minstrels' genius, and they were condemned to the obscure haunts of the dissolute and

depraved. Thus they became as much the promoters of license and disorder as their noble predecessors, the Bards, had been levers in the march of civilization. Let it not be affirmed, therefore, that the celebrated statute for the suppression of the Minstrels by the Parliament of Elizabeth was a blow aimed at music; on the contrary, it was a shield spread over it for protection, and elevated the art to a position which it has since nobly maintained.

The result was, that music became taught by men who professionally studied and practised it; and, besides this, the fashionable occupation of singing glees, catches, and, above all, the delightful madrigal, excited the enthusiasm of the young nobles, and substituted the practice of music for the degrading brawl and dissolute game.

It has been asserted, by some of the keenest analysts of history, that the brilliant reigns of Elizabeth and Anne owed music a far larger debt for the promotion of refinement in manners and purity in morals, than music owed to the patronage of the "Litterati" of these periods. In fact, the bitter opposition which the introduction of opera endured from Pope, Addison, Swift, Young, and others of their contemporaries, must not be forgotten, if it were only in remembrance of the triumph achieved in conquering their opposition at last, and gaining the powerful aid of Pope and Addison as its advocates.

The music of the brilliant Elizabethan age seems to be the parent of a perfectly new era, in which the array of constellated genius clusters so thickly and follows each other in such rapid succession, that we can scarcely demand specimens of any particular style in which the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries do not abound.

If we attempted to classify the characteristics of the reigns of Elizabeth and her successors by the style of their music, we should be furnished with ample materials for the task; but one of the most striking effects of music in these periods is the harmonizing influence which it invariably seemed to have exercised upon the disturbed spirit of the age. The chivalric enterprises, so rife in the days of Elizabeth, were unquestionably promoted by the delightful practice of the glee and madrigal, which celebrated the praises of heroes and sounded the glory of valour as faithfully as did the bards of old; while the purity of the age was essentially promoted by its universal devotion to the practice of music.

We may now pass to the more stirring periods which follow Elizabeth's glorious age, and notice the changes produced under succeeding dynasties. The reign of James I, though by no means remarkable for the patronage or progress of music, familiarized us with the charming Scotch ballad, which afterwards played so important a part in the struggles of the unhappy

Stuarts. I need not remind any one, familiar with the details of English history, how invariably music sounded out the watch-words both of Cavalier and Puritan; and in the dark days of the terrible warfare between these two opposing factions, it is remarkable to observe how inevitably both parties resorted to the all-powerful aid of music to stimulate their cause. Thus we find, on the one hand, the gallantry and reckless bravery of the cavalier constantly sustained by the merry troll, the ever-popular catch and glee, and the still more favourite drinking song and chorus; while, on the other hand, the stern zeal and enthusiastic fervour of the roundhead could be stimulated to the very madness of enthusiasm and irrepressible triumph by the old chaunt and the solemn death song, which the iron legions of the Commonwealth were accustomed to thunder forth in massive chorus through the long watches of the night, around their camp fires, in the stern conventicle, and even in the very front of battle, at the cannon's mouth, and in the jaws of death itself. When we remember that the deadly conflicts of the time, and the mighty struggles which decided the fate of this great nation, were on each side excited to fiercest action by the irresistible influence of music, we cannot fail to acknowledge the vast power over the human mind which this wonderful art exercises.

It is a touching and significant fact to note that the history of the New England Puritans shows that the first act of the exiles, on landing, was "to sing a

hymn." History declares that their little band was thinned by sickness and death; some of them were so weak that they had to be carried on shore; the bitter cold of the climate froze the very spray as it dashed against their garments, and yet, in the language of the gifted poetess, Mrs. Hemans,

> "Amidst the storm they sang,
> And the stars heard, and the sea,
> And the sounding aisles of the dim wood rang
> To the anthem of the free."

The period occupied between the reign of Charles II and the close of that of Queen Anne presents a most remarkable era for music. Matthew Locke and Purcell both contributed, by their brilliant genius, to divide the laurels between English and foreign music. Purcell, ever inimitable, whether in opera, song, sacred or secular music; Arne, in a succeeding period, with his rich treasures of operatic and descriptive music, together with the steadily increasing popularity of the glee and madrigal composers; and the numberless delicious Jacobite melodies which the misfortunes of the hapless Stuarts suggested, spread over the entire land a charming variety of music, which elevated the mind and delighted the imagination of the people.

I have before alluded to the strikingly beneficial influence which the immortal compositions of Mozart, Haydn, Handel, and their contemporaries exercised upon religion, civilization, and refinement generally;

but whilst we gratefully own the vast debt which England owes to the great masters of the German and Italian schools, we must never forget the universal acknowledgment of all musical dilettanti, that English glees and madrigals stand alone and almost unrivalled, and that good morals and good manners owe to their practice an inestimable debt. Purcell's *King Arthur*, Arne's *Artaxerxes* and *Comus*, Locke's Witches' Music in *Macbeth* and the music to the *Tempest*, besides innumerable other operatic and vocal gems of the above-named and other contemporary musicians of England, are compositions as authoritative and standard in their excellence as those of any country or age of history, and will ever be remembered as amongst the most noble incentives to refinement, good taste, and good feeling, of which the intellectual progress of England can boast. It has been said, and not without fair evidence of truth, that the charming Scotch songs composed in behalf of the unfortunate Stuarts, but especially of the beloved "Prince Charlie," contributed more effectually to sustain the enthusiasm of his followers than all other causes of influence combined. When the errors of the unhappy Stuarts would have otherwise alienated their adherents, or their poverty arrested the progress of their cause, the gallant war song and cheering strain of their jacobite roundelays revived the drooping spirits of their followers, and acted on their failing zeal like the sound of the trumpet on the war horse, and proved an irre-

sistible call to deeds of gallantry, and even death, for "Bonnie Prince Charlie."

A notice of the invaluable influence exerted on British character and history by the power of music would be very incomplete without an allusion to the vast national services rendered to this country by the lyrics of Charles Dibdin. One of the most admired of modern writers says of Dibdin: "His stirring poetry helped in no small degree to form the character of our brave naval defenders." I would correct this remark by saying, "his stirring *music, as well as poetry;*" for, whatever effect the poem may have had on the character of the sailor, it would have been unexercised till doomsday, unless it could have been recited with the combination of music in the form of song.

The unrivalled statesman, Pitt, publicly acknowledged the services and patriotic influence exerted in behalf of the country by Dibdin's lyrics. In a period when the entire fortunes of England may have been said to depend on the strength, power, and fidelity of her navy, and when that navy was supplied, often by impressment, from a class far inferior to those who now seek service in it, nearly nine hundred of these songs became household words in the lips of the British sailor; stimulating his love of country and fidelity to his sovereign, zeal for his cause, devotion to home, wife, sweetheart, and every patriotic virtue and manly grace.

If our ships have been justly called "the wooden walls," which have established our freedom and preserved our lives and liberties intact, our sailors' brave hearts and dauntless hands may, with still greater truth, be termed the living strength of those walls, and the resistless force which has made them impregnable. The noble lyrics of Dibdin in praise of virtue and truth, his gallant songs, so full of encouragement, patriotism, love of country, home, and freedom, helped to fortify those brave hearts, and to strengthen those dauntless hands. All honour, then, to the naval bard of modern times; and to the "immortal art" through which he accomplished so much.

From whatever point of view music is to be considered, it must be accounted the greatest chastener of the human mind, the most universal and purest of mundane enjoyments. It rocks the infant to sleep in its cradle, or on its mother's breast; it instigates the warrior to battle, and cheers the seaman in the tempest; it is the true language of joy; the close-knitter of brotherly affection; the friend of civilization; the handmaid of religion; and one of the proudest plumes in the eagle pinion of freedom.

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